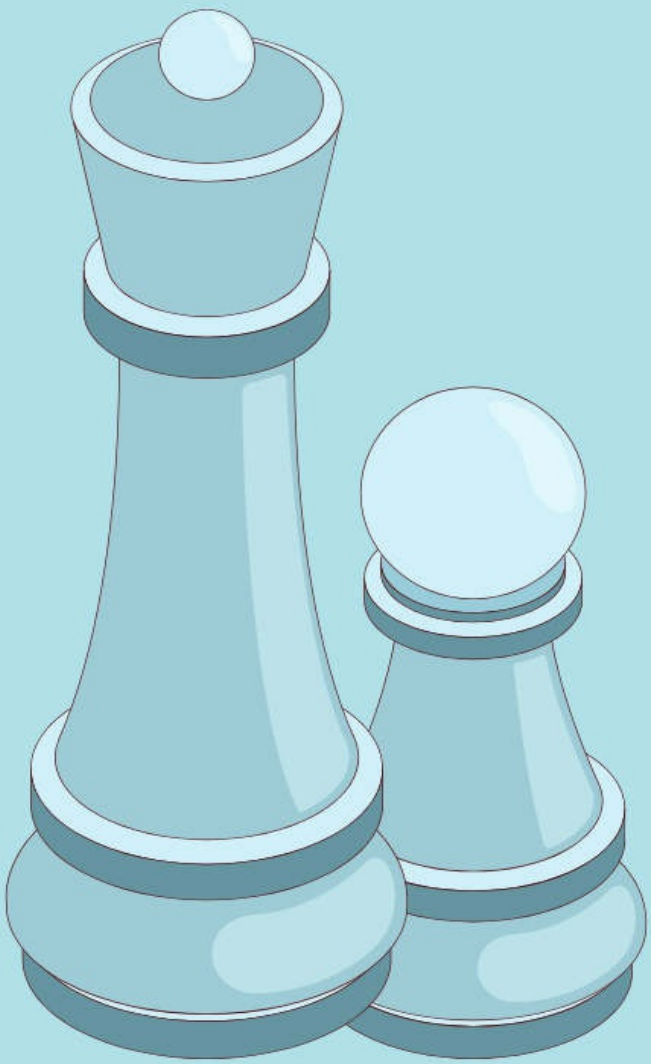
CHESS ATTACKS EXPLAINED

THE ESSENTIAL TECHNIQUES



STEVE EDWARDS

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THE ESSENTIAL TECHNIQUES

Steve Edwards

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this book is to provide the student with a level of understanding that will enable him to bring about a successful attack in a game of chess.

A detailed examination of various themes is designed to provide the necessary depth of knowledge and understanding to achieve this goal.

My endeavour is to shine a light on how attacks in chess evolve, and to provide a mechanism that the student can keep in his pocket whilst playing his own games. A step-by-step approach has been followed that highlights common denominators which link different parts of an attack; this exploration in turn divulges certain key ingredients that combine to make up the nuts and bolts of a successful attack in chess.

This book is divided into five sections.

The First Part commences with a foundation; the purpose of which is to provide a firm grasp of essential factors. This includes a detailed examination of each individual piece, and explains how to obtain the maximum value from the collective pieces.

In Part Two the reader is introduced to methods of forming a plan, and is given advice on how to calculate. A further section on tactics is provided with the intention of strengthening this part of the student's arsenal.

Part Three is an examination of the opening. In this section common errors in opening play are observed with the intention of recognising these factors in our own game and thus avoiding them in the future; this section also explores how to recognise and punish any inaccurate play and mistakes on the part of our opponent. Following this there is an examination of various means of obtaining and exploiting advantages in the opening.

Part Four contains an analysis of some typical attacks. This part looks in detail at how an attack is constructed from the very beginning, and how the

attacks are planned and prosecuted.

Part Five views the skeletal bones of various positions, concentrating on positional themes such as weak pawns and weak structures. Here we view various defects in a pawn set-up and demonstrate how to recognise and exploit these aspects.

Finally there are two sections devoted to exercises.

This course provides the reader with sign-posts that indicate the presence of a tactical advantage. The reader is also directed towards strategic goals with a mapped out route that indicates what sort of advantage exists, and what plans to adopt. Accordingly the reader is armed with a guide on how to identify and exploit a given advantage.

I believe this book will be of great value to the beginner, but more experienced players who have stagnated will also benefit from the lessons within. If you have been playing chess for a number of years and struggle to get above 1500 to 1650 then this book would be ideal for you.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

My introduction to the sixty-four squares was anything but conventional. A lot of people talk about learning to play chess at school, and I've lost count of the number of self-proclaimed school champions that I've encountered over the years. In *my* time at school, the most useful thing *I* learned was how to hide.

As far back as I can remember I've always had a love and fascination of chess; it is the ultimate mind game. Chess presents an opportunity to pit your intellect against that of another human being, and hopefully to emerge victorious.

I learned to play chess on a building site when I was eighteen. In 1982, I joined my local chess club, located at Margate, in the fair county of Kent, and then I started playing chess competitively.

That's when the journey begun, and I immersed myself into the vast ocean that is chess. I learned about openings, and their history. I learned about the great players of the past such as Philidor, Morphy, Capablanca, Alekhine and many more. I opened the Pandora's box that is tactics. I delved deep into the corridors of strategy. I studied the opening, the middlegame and the endgame, and before I knew it I was in up to my head, and I knew there was no going back.

From that day to this my enthusiasm has never dampened. I have been playing competitive chess for forty years. I have played at club, county, tournament, and even international level, if you count Gibraltar.

I have chalked up a number of tournament wins and second places, most recently at the Coventry Rapid 2019, where I came outright second in the Major section. Equal first at Crewe, in the intermediate, 2018. Joint second at the British Rapid Play, Intermediate section, 2017. Equal first at Sheffield Intermediate, 2015, and joint second at Gibraltar, Amateur section, 2010. I could add more, but I don't want to blow my own trumpet too much.

Suffice to say that I have considerable experience, and this experience I have put at your disposal within the following pages.

February, 2022 Birmingham U.K.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

!Excellent move.

?A mistake.

!?A good move that contains a dubious element.

?!A dubious move that contains a good element.

!!An outstandingly excellent move.

?? An horrendous blunder.

+Check.

++Double check.

#Checkmate.

When playing an Internet opponent I have used A. N. Other as their name.

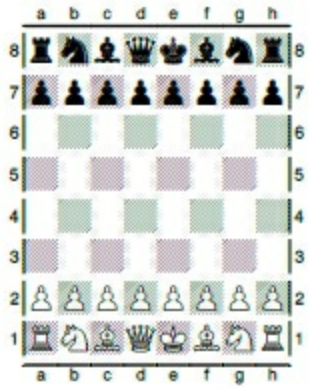
I have used my initials to indicate when I am playing: S.E

PART ONE: THE ESSENTIAL BUILDING BLOCKS, A FOUNDATION COURSE

For any house to stand it must be based on solid foundations. In Part One, we lay the foundations that ensure that the final brick is placed upon a firm house.

An introduction to the Attack.

Here is the nature of our problem:



1.1 W

You have the White pieces – start an attack!

Chess is often compared to war. The position in diagram 1.1 is comparable to two warring nations, each keeping a watchful eye on the other, and viewing each other with suspicion

Both sides have equal resources; there is a balance of power.

If one nation sets out to attack another then it should first seek an advantage of some sort. The most typical advantage in warfare is to outnumber the other side. Given that there is numerical parity at the outset, this does not seem possible in a game of chess. However, it often proves possible to obtain a monopoly on force, and via this monopoly to outgun the opposition, consider the following miniature game.

1.e4 e5 2.Bc4 Bc5 3.Qf3 d6?? 4.Qxf7#

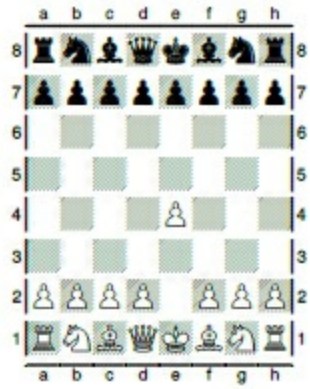
See diagram 1.2.

1.2

Game over, and it only took four moves. Incidentally, this is known as Scholar's Mate.

But what actually happened? To understand this attack we must view it in its various stages.

1.e4



1.3 B

The parity is broken.

Herein lies the nature of White's advantage of having the first move - White initiates. In a sense White now outnumbers his opponent. With this first move White introduces four factors that hitherto were absent:

Factor one: White occupies the centre with a pawn.

Factor two: White's pawn on e4 encroaches on Black's territory by

controlling two squares in Black's camp, d5 and f5.

Factor three: Advancing the e pawn opens lines for White's pieces, in particular his light-squared bishop and his queen, these two pieces now have access to the board.

Factor four: Advancing the pawn to e4 gains space for White.

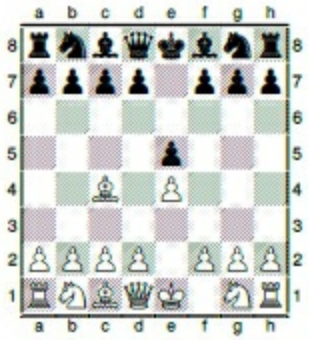
These aspects confer an undisputed initiative on the first player. White has gained a head of steam. However, the onus is now on White to maintain this edge.

The position viewed from Black's perspective is entirely different. Black is already under pressure to catch up. Black's territory has been invaded, he must react.

1…e5

Black mirrors White's move, and gains the same advantages of hitting two squares in White's camp, d4 and f4. Black has opened lines for his f8 bishop and the queen, and he has gained space. Black's problem, however, is that he remains a move behind. Whilst Black can catch up and match White's gains, he cannot overtake White; therefore, White can maintain the initiative.

2. Bc4



1.4 B

White deploys his bishop to an active square. The bishop is on an open

line. From this vantage point the bishop eyes the f7 pawn. White identifies a target.

Black follows suit.

2 …Bc5

Unfortunately for Black he remains a move behind.

3. Qf3

1.5 B

White mobilizes a second piece to an open line, and intensifies the pressure against the pawn on f7. White threatens checkmate.

3 …d6??

A game-losing blunder.

4. Qxf7 Checkmate.

In its most elementary form, White first and foremost had a plan. White occupied the centre with a pawn, and in doing so he created vital open lines for his light-squared bishop and queen. Secondly he deployed his bishop to c4, targeting a specific point in Black's camp, the f7 pawn. White then developed his queen to f3; in doing this White succeeds in mobilizing sufficient force to secure his objective: to deliver checkmate on f7, and the last phase saw him successfully conclude his attack.

Although simplistic and brief, we have seen the combination of a number

of factors in this attack. The points that emerged are present in all successful attacks. Indeed they are the very nuts and bolts of a successful attack. For any attack to succeed the following three elements must be present.

1, A PLAN OF ATTACK.

2, IDENTIFICATION OF A POINT TO ATTACK.

3, THE MOBILISATION OF SUFFICIENT FORCE.

Points one and two are interchangeable. In the first instance a focus of attack may be identified and then refined, to form a plan of attack. The order of events isn't paramount. The inclusion of both elements is, however, essential.

In all instances when checkmate is delivered, it is because the attacker has achieved a monopoly on force; in this way one side may outnumber the other. White kept his foot on the gas; he retained the initiative and kept his forward momentum.

You might have noticed another aspect present in this attack. This factor is unfortunately beyond our ability to control, but its presence is essential. In order for any attack to be successful we need our opponent to make a mistake.

In our Scholar's Mate example White threatened mate on move three with 3.Qf3. Black totally overlooked the threat of mate on f7, and played an irrelevant move, 3…d6?? This was a blunder that allowed White to win.

It is a shame to pour cold water on the beautiful game, but the outcome of a game of chess is not so much decided by its perfections, but by its imperfections, and even the most brilliant attack has in its midst a mistake, or a number of mistakes, on the part of the defeated side.

There is a well-known saying in chess:

The player that won was the player who made the mistake before last.

If every move were perfect all games would be a draw, so a mistake of some sort or other is mandatory for a game of chess to be won.

Mistakes in chess are, unfortunately, common. Even the top Grandmasters make blunders. We are human, it comes with the territory. The trick is to make as few mistakes as possible in our own games, and to identify and exploit those of our opponent.

There are different levels of mistake in chess. One inaccuracy is not likely to cost the game, but ten probably will; whereas a blunder will cost the game in one move, providing, that is, that the blunder is identified.

Attacks in chess are legion. They can take many shapes and forms. There are a million and one different ways to deliver checkmate, perhaps a slight exaggeration, but there are lots of different checkmating attacks and checkmating patterns.

However, there are only a small number of types of attack. There is the direct assault on the king. This can be an attack against an un-castled king in the centre, or an attack against the castled king on the edge of the board. There are attacks that are designed to win materiel. Typically these are short tactical strikes. There are long drawn out strategic campaigns that have a weak pawn as the end prize. We cannot cover every eventuality, but in the following pages we view a number of games, which will be used to explain and illuminate key attacking ideas and techniques.

In this section we have identified the following essential ingredients for a successful attack:

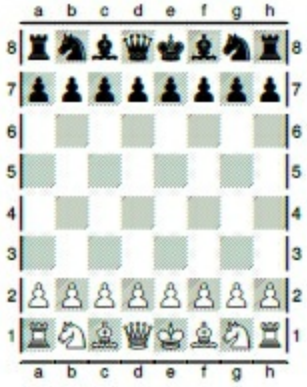
1, A PLAN OF ATTACK.

2, IDENTIFICATION OF A POINT TO ATTACK.

3, THE MOBILISATION OF SUFFICIENT FORCE.

We have also seen the importance of placing a pawn in the centre, and the necessity to bring our pieces off the first rank and develop them in a meaningful, and aggressive fashion.

Returning to the original problem that we were faced with:

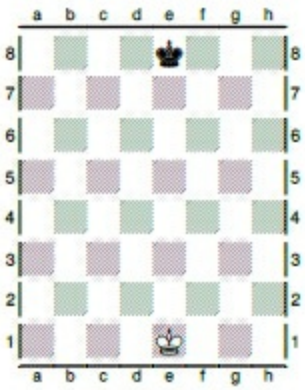


1.6 W

You have the White pieces, start an attack.

A consideration of the centre

The immediate centre is made up of four squares: e4, d4, e5 and d5. The peripheral centre includes those squares that surround the immediate centre: c3, d3, e3, f3, f4, f5, f6, e6, d6, c6, c5 and c4. The peripheral squares have a bearing on the centre, therefore, they have significance to the centre.



2.1

In all opening manuals we are advised again and again that the centre, and control of the centre is one of the prime aims of the opening, therefore, we should start a game of chess by placing a pawn on one of the central squares, either e4 or d4. This is good advice, but there is little to no explanation of why the centre is so important. Is White going to lose if he flouts the golden rules and instead of starting a game by putting a pawn in the centre he advances a pawn on the edge of the board?

The answer is no. White won't lose immediately if he plays a move such as 1.a4 instead of 1.e4, but let's view the difference between the two moves:

2.2 B

White makes his first move – 1.a4.

We need to ask a few questions about this move in order to understand its ‘merits’, and its drawbacks.

Question one: What does this move accomplish?

Question two: How does this move aid our development?

Question three: Does this move challenge our opponent?

We have to bear in mind that being in possession of the first move gives White an opportunity to gain the advantage. White’s first move should present a challenge to Black. White’s initial move should generate a situation in which Black has to catch up.

Can you imagine a game of darts in which the first player deliberately sets out to score three points? In a game of darts between top class professionals the first player would seek the maximum score of 180, thus setting a challenge to the second player of having to catch up, it’s the same in chess.

1.a4, what does it accomplish?

2.3 B

1.a4, gains space. The rook controls the space that has been gained behind the a4 pawn. White has established a pawn on the fourth rank, and this pawn now influences one square in our opponent's half of the board - b5. Furthermore, the space gained allows the rook on a1 to be lifted to the third rank, to a3, and from that vantage point the rook surveys the third rank. White could then activate the rook at a very early stage and bring it over to the centre of the board where it would bear down on his opponent's position, but bringing the rook into the game too early could expose it as a target for our opponent.

How does this move, 1.a4, aid White's development?

The pawn on a4 has gained space and it enables White to bring the rook into the game, so far this move isn't too bad, it might have some merit.

Does 1.a4, cause Black any problems?

Well, no. If the rook comes out too early and moves to a central square on the third rank it prevents a central pawn from advancing, this hampers White's development. Furthermore, Black is not placed in a situation where he needs to catch up and achieve equality.

Black can respond with 1…e5, placing a pawn in the centre, and he would stand better.

2.4 W

Black has established a pawn in the centre of the board. Black has gained space. The e5 pawn influences two squares in White's half of the board, d4 and f4. Black has opened a diagonal for his dark-squared bishop on f8, and for his queen.

It is White who now has to respond to the initiative that Black has gained. White has squandered the advantage of first move, a crime against chess.

Let's set the board up again and give White another go at first move. This time let's give White 1.e4.

See diagram 2.5.

2.5 B

White's pawn on e4 has gained space. The pawn on e4 influences two squares in Black's half of the board, d5 and f5, whereas the pawn on a4 only influenced one square in the opponent's half of the board - b5, so we have already doubled our money here; and White has opened lines for his light-squared bishop and the queen.

We can see by this comparison of 1.a4 and 1.e4, that a pawn advance in

the centre is far better than a pawn push on the edge of the board.

And certainly this creates a situation where Black can only react to White’s first move. White is better and Black needs to find equality.

A consideration of tactics, spotting the signposts, and thinking tactically

To embark on a game of chess without a good understanding of tactics is akin to going to the Antarctic dressed only in a string vest. You don't have adequate equipment, and you will die.

A good grounding in tactics is vitally important to the rounded chess player. With such a skill set you stand a good chance of winning. In the absence of an understanding of tactics you are at risk of overlooking winning continuations in your own play, and of falling prey to tactical ploys by your opponent.

Tactics run like a river through a game of chess. Regardless of what stage of the game you may find yourself in there is always room for tactics; sometimes the river is a boiling white tipped force that demands our attention, and on other occasions it is barely perceived at all, like an underground stream, but it will always be present in some form or other, but unfortunately, it is sometimes overlooked.

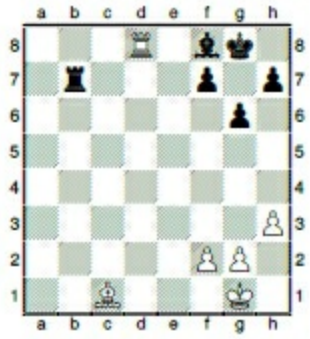
There are signposts in many positions that point the way to tactical play. These signs sometimes illuminate potential tactics like a neon light; in other instances this light is not so bright.

This is all well and good providing that you spot the signs, but it is of little value if you are unable to see these indicators. It's like map reading - if you are stranded in the middle of nowhere and you have a map, you have a chance, but not if your map reading skills are zero.

When we address the sixty-four squares we should be on familiar territory. We should be able to navigate successfully from A to B, and we should be able to see those neon lighted signposts that say fork, pin, skewer discovered check, double check, and so on.

In this section we will track down the signposts that indicate that conditions are ripe for tactics.

Let’s start simple.



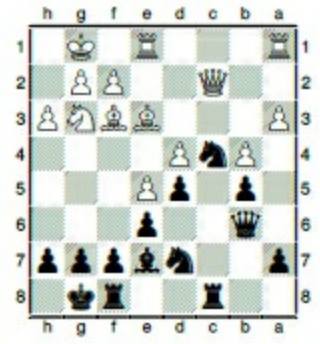
3.1 W

In the above position, material is equal. The big difference between the two sides, however, is that Black’s bishop in pinned against his king. The Black bishop can’t move without placing his king in check, and this is an illegal move. White has the simple 1.Bh6, attacking the unfortunate bishop on f8 a second time. Black has no means of defending his bishop, and is facing not only the loss of a piece, but checkmate with a possible 2.Rxf8#.

Black is lost. A riposte with 1...Rb1+, doesn’t help him. White moves his king out of check with 2.Kh2, and Black is still threatened with mate on the move. This is a typical tactical device, and is characteristic of chess: when your opponent is down, kick him.

The indicators are transparent. The Black bishop is paralysed, there is an open diagonal on h6 – f8, an open wound in Black’s heart.

We now move onto some more complex examples.

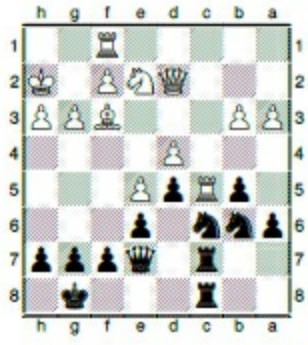


3.2 B

Here is a blinding light.

Black's rook is on the same file as the White queen, therefore, Black can move the knight on c4 discovering an attack against White's queen, and what's more Black can take White's bishop on e3 with 1…Nxe3, thus winning materiel.

How is White to respond? If he recaptures on e3 he loses the queen on c2, and if he plays 2.Qxc8 then Black has 2…Rxc8 with 3.fxe3 or 3.Rxe3 and Black has won a queen for a rook.



3.3 B

Above is another example, but this time it is a little bit more involved. The indicators here are the vulnerable nature of White's rook on c5, and a number of undefended pieces in White's camp. The bishop on f3 is undefended, the queen on d2 is undefended and the rook on f1 is also undefended, all of these factors play a part. Black can exploit the tactical weakness in White's camp by first taking on either d4 or e5 with his knight.

Precise calculation is required.

If Black first plays 1…Nxe5, he threatens 2…Nxf3+, forking White's king and queen, but White has 2.Rxc7, which threatens Black's queen on e7. Nevertheless, Black can continue with 2…Nxf3+, and as this is check White has to stop to respond to the check, so say 3.Kg2, this threatens the knight on f3 and leaves Black's queen attacked by the White rook on c7, so let's give Black 3…Qxc7. Black is clearly better, he is a pawn up and White's king has been dragged towards the centre and is dangerously exposed.

Now let's look at 1…Nxd4, I think this is better. White's rook on c5 is now bereft of any protection and is in immediate danger of being taken, whilst Black still has the threat of 2...Nxf3+, forking the White king and queen, so 2.Rxc7, is almost a forced move, but this time it is slightly different as after 2…Nxf3+ 3.Kg2 Qxc7, and White still has to take back on f3 to recapture his piece so 4.Kxf3, and the Black queen can now take a second pawn on e5 – 4…Qxe5, and he threatens queen e4 mate. Black is head and shoulders better.

3.4 W

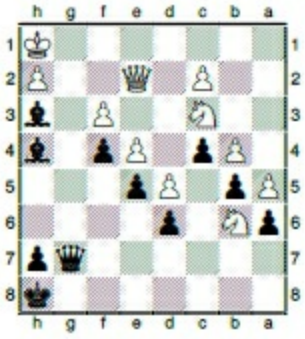
In the above example, Black has just played his knight to c4. At first glance this looks good for Black as he threatens White's bishop on e3 and the undefended pawn on b2, but Black has one glaring tactical weakness – the undefended bishop on b7, this presents White with the opportunity to swap his rook for two minor pieces.

As things stand Black's pawn on d5 blocks the diagonal between the opposing bishops on the h1 – a8 diagonal, but if the pawn can be prised away from d5 the bishops will be facing each other. White plays 1.Rxc4! Black either accepts the loss of the knight for nothing or recaptures on c4 with the d pawn, thus exposing his bishop on b7 and losing a piece.

3.5 W

There is a materiel imbalance in the above position. White is the exchange up for two pawns. Black's king resides in the centre, and Black has an undefended piece – the queen on c7. Can White benefit from this?

You bet he can. Black's king and queen are on the same rank. White first plays a check and then skewers the king against the queen: 1.Rxf7+! Kxf7, forced, 2.Qxh7+ Kf8, and White picks up his prize – 3.Qxc7.



3.6 B

What are the clues here?

White has an undefended knight on c3. White's queen is busy guarding against the threat of mate on g2, so White's queen can't defend the c3 knight as well as preventing mate. The queen is in danger of becoming overworked. Black would have a won game if he can get his dark-squared bishop on the g1 - h7 diagonal, easy: Black plays 1…Be1. White can't take the bishop on e1 with his queen without allowing mate on g2, so he has to move the knight – 2.Na2 and black responds with 2...c3. Black played this move to enable the bishop to zigzag to e3, 3.Nc8. Irrelevant, 3…Bd2 4.Nxd6 Be3. See diagram 3.6, on the next page.

3.7 W

Black threatens mate on g1. White's queen can't guard both g2 and g1, mate is inevitable. The White queen is overworked, but White goes in for 5.Nf7+, a desperate move. Black removes the knight with 5…Qxf7, and White resigns.

A further instance of an overloaded piece can be seen below.

3.8 B

The clue here is that White's rook has the task of defending both the pawn on e3 and the bishop on b1. The poor old rook can't perform both of these jobs at the same time. Black plays 1…Bxe3, and if White captures on e3 with 2.Rxe3 then Black picks up the now undefended bishop on b1, and he wins yet another pawn.

3.9 B

In diagram 3.8, Black can bring about a situation in which he can win a piece. The signposts are that White will have his light-squared bishop and queen on his third rank, and Black can bring a rook to e3.

The following position can be visualized: see diagram 3.10.

3.10 B

Then it’s a simple matter of playing the rook to e3, skewering the queen against the bishop on b3. Black has a couple of captures that brings this position into being: from diagram 3.8, Black plays 1…axb3, White is obliged to recapture on b3 in order to maintain materiel equality, otherwise he will be a pawn down for nothing, 2.Bxb3 Black now makes another exchange, and again White’s hand is forced 2…Nxd3 3.Qxd3 White recaptures on d3 to maintain materiel equality, but now the dye is cast and Black plays 3…Re3. This wasn’t complicated it was just a matter of reading

the signposts.

3.11 B

The signposts read – undefended bishop on a4, and open diagonal to White's king on the e1 – h4 diagonal.

Black plays 1…Qh4+, picking up the bishop on a4.

3.12 B

Black's pawn on f7 is pinned against his king, this renders the pawn on g6 enprise, and White can crash through with 2.Qxg6+.

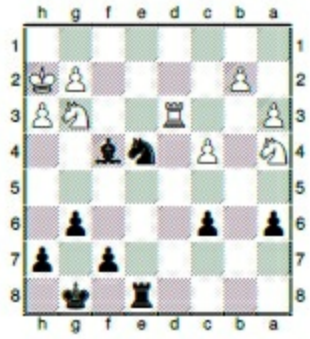
If Black is paying attention, which he should be, then he can comfortably meet this threat in a number of ways with say 1…Nf8, 1…Kg7, or 1…Be6, but Black is guilty of only looking at his own attack and plays 1…Ng5?, intending a sacrifice on h3, but it's too late. White plays 2.Qxg6+, and Black is lost. With this one move White exposes fatal weaknesses in Black's

camp. The bishop on h6 is hanging, as is the pawn on h5. Black must play 2…Bg7, and now White plays 3.Nxh5 - threatening mate on g7. Black's only sensible attempt to defend himself is 3…Ne6, but after 4.Bxe6, Black is defenseless against the mating attack on g7, and resigns.

3.13 W

White's rook and Black's queen are both on the d file. Black's d6 pawn is pinned. White plays 1.Nxe5, winning an important central pawn. Black responds with 1…Qc7, overlooking a pin: 2.Ng6 Rfc8 3.Nxe7+, allowing simplification. White is better.

It's simple stuff, and perhaps a bit elementary, but it works.



3.14 B

Black has a pin against White's knight on g3, and can win the exchange with 1…Nxg3 2.Rxg3 and Bxg3+, but the resulting position is not clear. Black is the exchange up but White still has the knight, which can be a very tricky piece, and White has a three to two majority on the queenside, the win is problematic for Black, but he can exploit the pin further; taking on g3 with 1…Nxg3, is fine but after 2.Rxg3,instead of 2…Bxg3, merely winning the

exchange, Black plays 2…Re3.

3.15 W

Black will emerge a rook up with a won game. Forks can also prove decisive.

3.16 B

Black's queen on c7 is attacked and undefended, but it is White that needs to be worried. Have you noticed that the positioning of White's queen and king leaves him vulnerable to a knight fork on e2? Black needs only make that square available to his knight and he wins the game.

Black plays 1…Rxe1+. Everything stops for check. White plays 2.Nxe1, and 2…Ne2+, bingo! Everything stops for check. White moves his king out of check and Black picks up the White queen.

3.17 W

The clue , in diagram 3.16, is the placement of Black's bishop on c6 and his knight on e6, both of these pieces are a prime target for a fork.

White plays 1.Bxc4, Black recaptures 1…dxc4, and the simple 2.d5 forks Black's bishop and knight, winning materiel and the game.

When players have no flight square for the king on their first rank it can make a back rank mate possible, or at least create a tactical target.

3.18 B

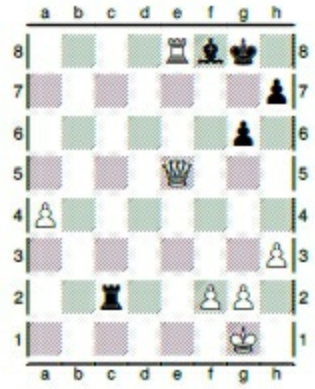
There are two aspects in White's position that stand out as tactical weaknesses. The undefended rook on e1, and the lack of any escape squares for the White king on the first rank.

Black plays 1…Nxf4, White must recapture: 2.Qxf4 and now 2…Qxd6. White resigned. He will be a rook down, if he captures on d6 – 3.exd6, then Black has 3…Rxe1+ 4.Qc1, forced, 4…Rxc1+ 5.Kxc1, and Black is a rook up with an easy win.

3.19

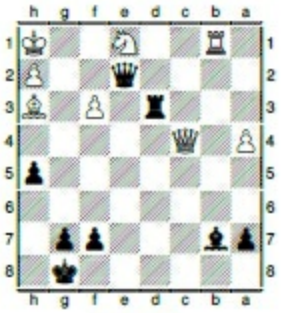
Black's king has hardly any squares to flee to. White plays 1.h5+ Kxh5 2.Qe8+ Kh4 3.Rh3 mate.

When a player leaves his king on an open diagonal he's asking for trouble. This is often a tactical weakness, which can be exploited.



3.20 W

White has a considerable advantage, he is a queen up for a bishop, and he has two extra pawns; the win, however, could still be some distance away, but White has a tactical means of accelerating the process. The clue is that Black's bishop is pinned by White's rook, as things stand Black is holding the bishop, but as this is an absolute pin White can take liberties. White plays 1.Qd6. Black's bishop is now attacked twice and only defended once. Black can resign, but in the game he first played 1...Rc1+, and after 2.Kh2, he resigned. Putting the queen on the same line as Black's bishop looked spectacular, but not, it's logical, note that 1.Qf6, or 1.Qe7, would have had the same result.



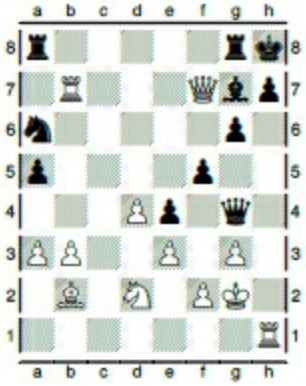
3.21 B

If you count up the material in diagram 3.20, you will see that Black is a piece down for just a pawn, but it is Black who has the initiative. Now is not the time for counting pieces, now is the time to strike.

The big clue here is that White's king and Black's bishop are on the same diagonal. White also has a number of undefended pieces – the bishop on h3, the queen on c4 and the rook on b1. These undefended pieces may help Black, but the prime aim is to force open the h1 – a8 diagonal for his bishop.

Black played 1…Rxf3.

Incredibly all of Black's pieces are hanging, but what is White to do? Black is threatening a fatal double check and discovered check with 2… Rf1+, White can remove the bishop with 2.Rxb7, but this loses his queen. In the complications White plays 2.Qxe2, overlooking the deadly 2…Rf1 mate.



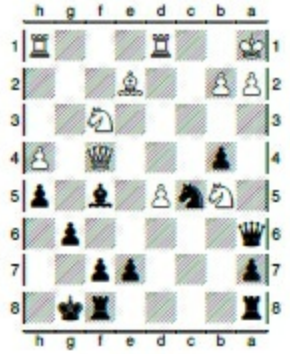
3.22 W

In diagram 3.31,White has constructed an ideal platform for a winning attack. All he needs do is to somehow get rid of Black's bishop on g7, and he

can crash through with Qxh7#, but how does White remove the Black bishop on g7?

White plays 1.d5. This opens the diagonal for White's slumbering bishop on b2, and makes Black a present of his b2 bishop, but Black dare not take White's bishop, but if he doesn't take White's bishop on b2, then White takes on g7 with 2.Bxg7+, and mate follows in quick order. Black is powerless.

He can delay for one move with 1…Nc7, but after 2.Rxc7, he has no sensible defence.

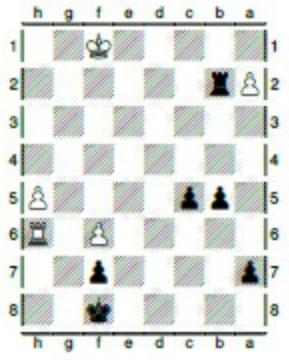


3.23 B

Once again we see a position in which Black is a piece down, but he has ample compensation. Black has two pawns for his piece and the placement of his developed pieces is excellent.

The clues here are the limited scope of White's king. Black's bishop on f5 cuts off the only flight square for White's monarch – b1. Black's queen pins the a2 pawn, and Black has a knight check.

Put all this together and it's not too long before we find 1…Nb3+, checkmate.



3.24 B

Here we have a rook and pawn ending in which Black is a pawn up, but White has just played 1.f6 threatening mate on the move with 2.Rh8#.

Unfortunately for White 1.f6 is a mistake. The clue is that White's rook is almost out of moves.

Black plays 1…Kg8, White's rook is trapped, effectively Black is a rook up, an easy win.

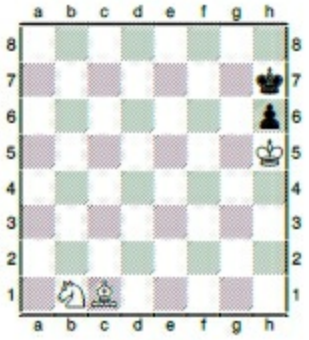
A consideration of the pieces

You may wonder why a consideration of the pieces is necessary. After all you already know how the pieces move and what they do, but in this section the pieces are put under the microscope as we undertake an intense study of each individual piece. The purpose of this is to in-bed a deep understand and appreciation of how the individual pieces work best, and, therefore, how to get the most out of our pieces.

The section commences with a comparison of the minor pieces, and proceeds to view the pieces individually.

Knights and bishops are the minor pieces. Each minor piece is said to be worth three pawns.

Bishops are long-range pieces and knights are short-range pieces. This difference, and its significance, is demonstrated below.



4.1 W

If White wants to capture Black's pawn on h6, he can do so with the bishop in one move:

1.Bxh6.

To capture the h6 pawn with the knight would take five moves. One route for the knight would be 1.Nd2, 2.Nf3, 3.Nh4, 4.Nf5, and finally the

knight can take the h6 pawn on the next move.

It is clear to see from this example that the bishop is far more effective than the knight in open positions.

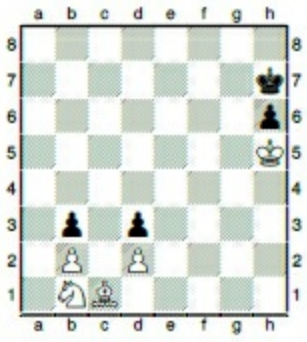
A further example of this theme is seen in diagram 4.2, see the next page.

4.2 W

White can take either the h6 or a6 pawn in one move. Black's knights are no more than bystanders, and are no match for White's bishop pair.

However, all pieces have a relationship with the various pawn structures that arise.

Let's return to diagram 4.1, and put some more pawns on the board.



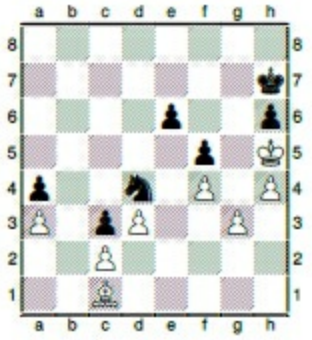
4.3 W

It is clear from this position that White's bishop on c1 is a hopeless creature, it has absolutely no scope at all, not a single move to its name. When bishops are hemmed in like this by their own pawns, the bishop is called a bad bishop.

This demonstrates a failing of the bishop, but not so for the noble knight. The knight has two different avenues of approach to the pawn on h6, and in both instances the knight arrives on a square to attack the h6 pawn in four moves.

Route one could be 1.Na3, 2.Nc4, 3.Ne5 and 4.Ng4. Route two could be 1.Nc3, 2.Nd5, 3.Ne7 and 4.Nf5. When knights have this freedom of movement it is described as a knight circuit. This demonstrates the advantage that the knight has over the bishop. The knight has a versatility that the bishop is not able to match. This allows the knight to perform certain finesses that the bishop can't emulate. The bishop is prisoner to a colour sequence, whereas the knight has no colour boundaries.

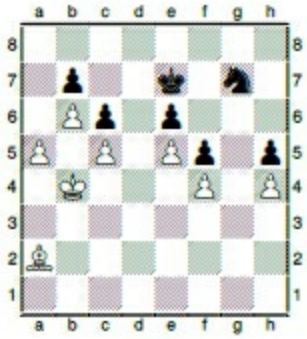
Another instance in which the knight is better than the bishop can be seen in the diagram below:



4.4 B

White's pawn on c2 is forfeit to Black's knight. White's bishop is powerless to prevent the loss of the c2 pawn, but worse still for White, Black can play 1…Ne2, threatening the undefended bishop on c1, and on his next move Black has 2…Nxg3, checkmate.

Knights too can be bad. In order to be effective a knight needs those all important circuits, and if the knight doesn't have a decent circuit then it is dead wood, consider the following positions:



4.5 W

In the above position the knight is a pathetic piece. The knight is limited to a circuit of just two squares, it can go to e8 and back to g7. The knight is hemmed in by its own pawns, which in turn are rooted in place and cannot move. The knight is a prisoner, and White has an easy win with his extra pawn on the queenside, all he needs to do is to play 1.Bc4 and push the a pawn, thus creating a passed pawn.

4.6 W

In diagram 4.6, we see a stark demonstration of a very bad knight. I don't think that you will ever see such a poorly creature as this miserable knight on a8. The poor thing doesn't have a single square that it can move to without being taken.

Knights come in to their own in the centre of the board. A knight cemented on a central square is an awesome power in the land.

Consider the following two diagrams: 4.7, and 4.8.

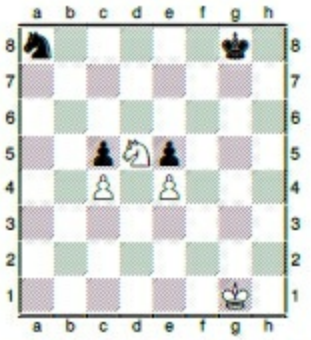
4.7 W

It is clear to see in this position that White's knight on e5 is much the better of the two knights. White's knight has legal access to a total of eight squares, whereas Black's knight, on the edge of the board, has only three legal moves, and two of those lead to its loss.

White's knight can go on holiday if it wants to, it can hop around the board to its heart's content, and eventually return to e5 where it has a ready made target in the shape of Black's pawn on c6, or it can hop to g6 with another target pawn on e7. This is not the case for the hapless character on a6. This knight is limited to just two squares b8 and a6.

This demonstrates a further point – knights on the rim are dim. A knight on the edge of the board is usually very bad and needs to be brought back into the game pronto.

A similar example can be seen below:



4.8 W

Here again we see an example where the centralised knight is much better than the sad character stood in the corner.

The Knight

So what is the benefit of a centralised knight in an actual game?

Let's see some examples of the knight in action.

S.E Hurn J Rhyl 2015

5.1 W

In this position we can see that White's knight on e4 is a giant. The White knight has vast swathes of Black's territory under observation; on e4

the knight has pressure on the pawns on d6 and f6, and Black is required to defend both of these pawns against the knight's threats. It is interesting to compare the respective knights. Black's knight is a passive and lowly character, whereas White's knight is active and dynamic.

In fact White could sac this knight on d6 and win, here is a sample line:

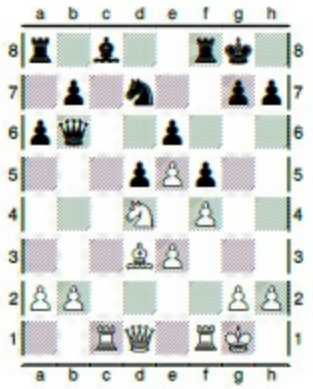
36.Nxd6 Qxd6 37.Bxh6 Rge8 38.Bxg7+ Kxg7 39.Qh7+ Kf8 40.Qf7#.

However, White found a quicker way:

36.Bxh6 Bxh6 37.Qxh6+ Qxh6 38.Rxh6+ Kg7 39.Rh7+ Kf8 40.Rf7+ Ke8 41.Nxd6#

The knight has the honor of delivering mate.

S.E Viszoka.I Birmingham 1998



5.2 B

White's knight has taken up residence in the centre of the board, and eyes Black's weak backward pawn on e6. The White knight is dominant, and far better than its counter part on d7.

As the game continues Black strives to improve his knight, and on move seventeen he places the knight on the central square e4:

5.3 W

White has no intention of letting the Black knight on e4 remain in its seat of power and happily exchanges it with 18.Bxe4.

We now fast forward this game to move thirty nine, and see that White's knight is still lodged on its central square:

See diagram 5.4.

5.4 W

The knight outguns Black's bishop which is a bad bishop since it is locked in by pawns on the same colour sequence.

White now simply marches his king up the board and looks for trouble.

40.Ka3 Bc8 41.Kb4 Bd7 42.Ka5 Bc8 43.Kb6 Bd7?

A bad mistake on Black's part; this drops a pawn for nothing. Black should have played a rook move thus maintaining the defense for the b7 pawn.

44.Kxb7 Bc8+ 45.Kb6 Bb7 46.b4 Bc8?

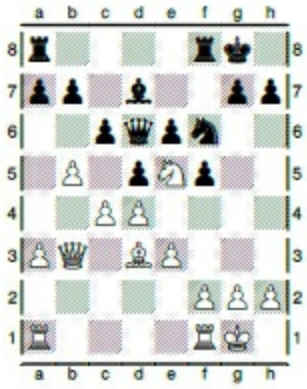
Another unprovoked mistake.

47.Nc6+

This knight fork wins materiel and ends the game.

White's knight was placed on d4 on move sixteen and remained at its post for a further thirty-one moves. If you have a powerful knight entrenched in a central position, why move it? Keep it in place until such a time as it is needed elsewhere.

S.E Woodward T Dudley 2019



5.5 B

We join this game after White's 15.Ne5.

Once again we see a knight take up an influential station in the centre of

the board.

And again Black centralizes his knight with 15…Ne4.

However, here we see the difference between a pure outpost that White's knight has on e5 and a case of easy eviction.

Play continued:

16.Rfd1

Black was threatening 16…Nd2 forking White's queen and rook.

16…Rfc8 17.f3

White evicts the unwanted Black knight from its post on e4, and shunts it back into mediocrity. The difference between White's knight on e5 and Black's knight on e4 is that Black has no pawns that can challenge the White knight and drive it off, thus White has a pure outpost for his knight, whereas Black's knight was resident in the centre only so long as White permitted.

White's knight remained at its post for a further seventeen moves, when we fast forward the game to move thirty two: see diagram 5.6.

5.6 W

White's centralised knight continues to maintain a press on Black's position. The knight poses a constant threat to Black's pawn on c6, and ties Black's puny light-squared bishop to the defense of this pawn; and we see

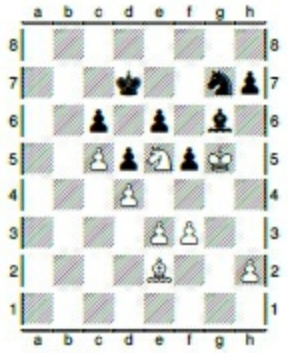
another example of a good knight versus a bad bishop. Moreover, the knight on e5 keeps a number of squares in Black's camp under constant surveillance, the d7, f7 and g6, squares are all under the cosh, and Black must remain vigilant against a possible knight invasion.

We can also see that White maintains his guard on the e4 square, that prevents Black's knight coming to the centre, and similarly Black's knight has remained on f6 since move seventeen, Black has failed to find a worthwhile use for this piece.

However, Black has staged a counterattack on the queenside and White's knight is required to meet Black's aggression. The game continued:

32.Nd3

Black's counterattack on the queenside fizzled out, and we rejoin the game after White's move forty: 40.Ne5+



5.7 B

On this occasion White's knight revisits the central e5 square with a vengeance. The knight gives check to Black's king whilst also attacking the Black bishop on g6. This allows White to win a pawn and the game quickly concluded: 40…Kc7 41.Nxg6.

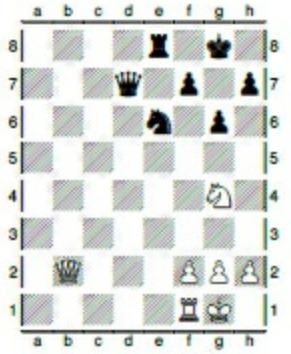
The knight has done its work, and can bring about a simplifying exchange and a won endgame for White.

Based on these three examples we can see that a knight located in the centre can exert long-term pressure on our opponent's position, and possess a

high value as a positional menace.

The knight is probably the hardest of all pieces to master, but once we become familiar with its idiosyncrasies we can appreciate that this piece is also an extremely dangerous tactical weapon.

In the diagram below we see White's knight poised for one of its great party pieces:

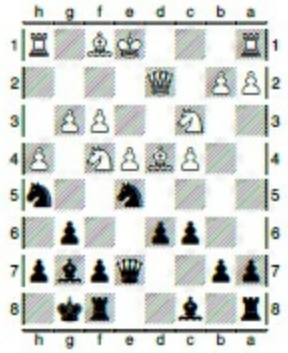


5.8 W

White moves his knight to f6 with check, but the knight is not only giving check to the Black king, it simultaneously attacks the king, queen and rook. This type of fork that hits the king queen and rook is called a family fork, it gets the whole lot, and a knight is capable of delivering this type of fork. This, and similar forks, is why the knight is such a feared tactical player. Below we see a number of simple, but effective examples of the knight giving a fork.

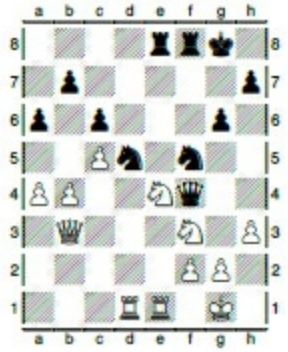
5.9 W

White plays 24.Nb6, forking the queen and rook.



5.10 B

Black plays 1…Nxf3+, forking White's king and queen, game over.



5.11 W

This is just a tad more complex, but White played 1.Nf6+, forking Black's king and rook. Black has overlooked that his knight on d5 is pinned against the king, and therefore, it is paralysed. Black must play 1…Rxf6, allowing White to take the rook on e8 with check, thus winning the exchange. Moving the king with say 1…Kf7, amounts to ,more or less the same result as White emerges the exchange up but the extra exchange of materiel ushers in a simplification, and Black wants to avoid this.

As we get to know the way in which the knight moves we can push, pull or otherwise cajole our opponent's pieces so as to bring about a knight fork.

Take the position below for example:

5.12 W

If Black's king was on f6, instead of his knight, then White would have a knight fork against king and queen with 1.Ne4+, White can push Black into this position:

1.Qxf6+! Kxf6

If Black avoids this recapture he remains a piece down with a lost game.

2.Ne4+

Black moves his king and White plays 3.Nxc5 and emerges a piece up with a game winning advantage.

5.13 B

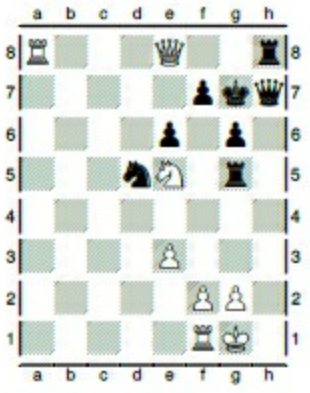
In this position Black is a piece up, but this seems to be a temporary state of affairs as White attacks the Black rook on e2 and the knight on f6. Black could save his rook and have good winning chances with 1…Ra2, and after

2.Rxf6, Black picks up the pawn on a3 and has a two to one majority of pawns on the queenside, however, the win remains problematic, so instead of this Black plays:

2…Rf2+! 2.Kxf2 And Black follows up with

2…Ne4+. Black picks up White's rook on his next move, with a won game.

White's alternative of 2.Kg3, still allows 2…Ne4+.



5.14 W

In the above position Black stands ready to give mate with 1…Qh1#, or 1…Qh2#. However, it is White to move, and White can turn the tables on Black and demonstrate that he is clearly better, all virtue of a knight fork.

White plays:

1.Qxh8+ Qxh8 2.Rxh8 Kxh8 3.Nxf7+

And White nets the rook on g5 with a materiel plus and a won game.

If a king is boxed in and has no squares, then knights have the ability to deliver a unique checkmate.

5.15 W

In this position White plays 1.Qg8+!

Black’s response is forced:

1…Rxg8

And White plays 2.Nf7#

This is called a smothered mate; sometimes known as Philidor’s mate, or Philidor’s legacy.

There are occasions when this theme can occur in the centre of the board, but the conditions have to be the same, the key factor is that the king has no flight squares.

See diagram 5.16, on the next page.

5.16 W

In this position White plays 1.Nf6#.

The king has no flight squares. You might note that White is a rook down, but materiel is not everything.

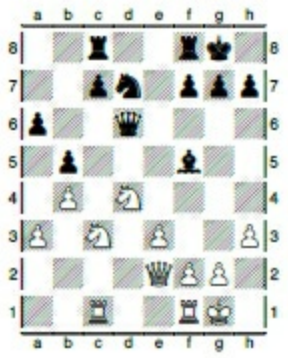
5.17 W

Again we see a position in which the Black king has no flight squares, note that White's queen on h5 is attacked by the Black knight on f6, but some things are more important than queens.

White plays 1.Ng6 #. White's bishop covers the only escape square – g8.

Aside from their wonderful party tricks the knights are also powerful attacking units in open play.

S.E Wise. K Birmingham 1994



5.18 B

In the above position White's knight on d4 is sitting pretty in the centre of the board and threatens the undefended bishop on f5. Play continues:

18…Bg6 19.Rfd1 Qe7

White threatens a discovered attack against Black's queen so Black retreats his queen; however, unfortunately for Black the queen comes into range of one of White's knights

20.Nd5 Qd6 21.Nc6

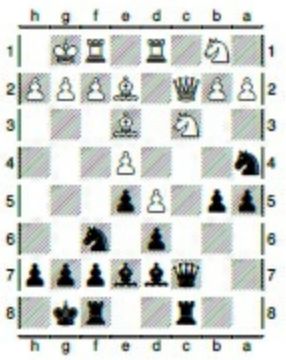
White's knights are buzzing and already he has a threat of a fork against Black's king and rook by playing a knight to e7.

21…Qe6 22.Nce7+ Kh8 23.Nxc8 Rxc8 24.Nf4 Qe7 25.Nxg6+ hxg6

5.19 W

White's knights have taken a terrible toll on Black, and White emerges the exchange up, leaving Black in tatters.

Burton.J S.E Birmingham 1998



5.20 W

A knight on the rim is dim, but Black threatens to push on with his b pawn, winning the knight on c3. Naturally, White tries to avoid this:

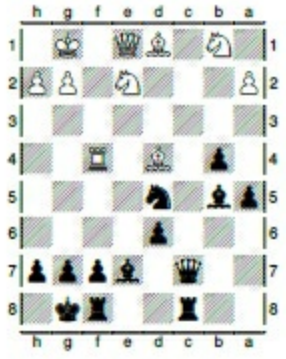
16.Qd3?

White sidesteps the threat of the pin, but he is careless and overlooks that the b2 pawn is now undefended and walks into a knight fork against his rook and queen.

16…Nxb2 17.Qd2 Nxd1 18.Bxd1 b4 19.Ne2

White's knight is forced away from the defense of the e4 pawn.

19…Nxe4 20.Qe1 Bb5 21.f4 exf4 22.Rxf4 Nf6 23.Bd4 Nxd5



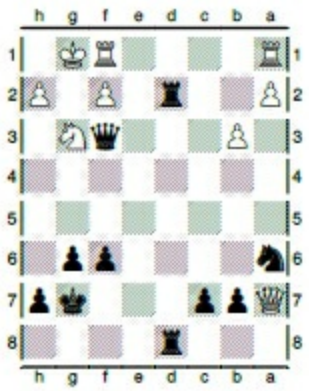
5.21 W

White drops yet another pawn. White is the exchange and three pawns

down; he has been wiped out by Black's knight.

There are some instances in which the knight slowly but purposefully moves in for the kill.

Finch. J S.E Charlton 1985



5.22 B

Black's knight on a6 is in the doldrums, but that is set to change. You might note that White's king has no flight squares, it is ripe for a smothered mate.

Play continued:

24…Nb4 25.Rae1 Nd3 26.Re7+ Kh6 27.Rxc7 Nf4 28.Qxb7

All too late White realizes the danger of Black's meandering knight. White desperately hopes for an exchange of queens, but Black continues with the knight's fatal march: Nh3# 0–1

S.E Rodgers. R Margate 1984

5.23 W

Black's king is exposed and vulnerable. White is making good use of his queen and rook, but he has one more unit that has yet to make its presence felt.

Play continued: 21.Nh4 Qc8

Black is hoping to bale out into an ending where he is a pawn down, and has chances of a draw, but it's too late, White has mobilized his knight, and the knight is ready to strike.

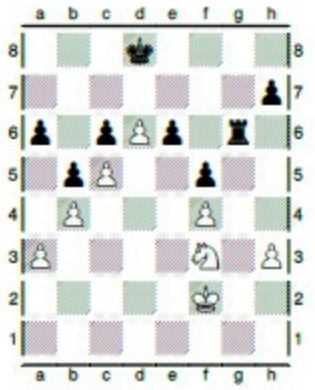
22.Nf5+ Ke8 23.Nd6+ Ke7

This is a bad day at the office for Black; he must keep the king in touch with the bishop otherwise the bishop is lost to the double attack from White's queen and rook, but saving the bishop comes at the expense of losing the queen, in either case Black is lost.

24.Nxc8+ 1–0

Sometimes the value of our pieces increase or decrease depending upon the activity of a piece and the threat that it may carry. Accordingly we might see occasions when a knight punches above its weight and is worth more than a rook.

S.E Soszynski. M Nottingham 2003



5.24 W

In this position White has given up the exchange in order to create a passed pawn, and the knight is an integral part of his plan.

Play continued:

47.Ne5

Again we witness the power of a knight in the centre of the board. Here the knight Forks the rook on g6 and the pawn on c6.

47…Rg7

47…Rh6, targeting White's pawn on h3 would be losing due to 48.Nf7+, forking the king and rook.

48.Nxc6+

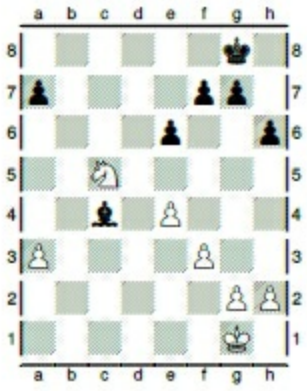
White has achieved his aim of obtaining two connected passed pawns in the c and d files.

White brings the king up to assist the progress of the pawns and the game is over for Black:

48Kc8 49.Ne5 h6 50.c6 h5 51.Ke3 Kd8 52.Kd4 Rg1 53.Kc5 Rd1 54.c7+ Kc8 55.Kc6 Rd5 56.d7+ Rxd7 57.Nxd7 1–0

It is not unusual to see minor piece endgames in which a knight and bishop contest the issue. When these two minor pieces come together in a head to head clash it is often the case that one or the other is much the better piece.

S.E Horne. D Birmingham 1985



5.25 B

White has just played his twenty-ninth move, and we are in an endgame.

Although there is symmetry in the position with both sides having an equal number of pawns and all these pawns being in the same files, nevertheless, there is also an imbalance; and this imbalance manifests itself in the difference between the types of minor pieces that are in play.

Each minor piece has different properties. As we have seen the bishop thrives on open lines and long-range endeavors, whereas the knight is more potent in short-range encounters.

With Black to move, he should recognize the one all important feature of this ending – he has a light-squared bishop, therefore, he will not want his pawns to become fixed on light squares, if this happens then the pawns may well become dependent on either the king or the bishop for their well being, this is a situation that Black should seek to avoid.

As things stand White enjoys a space advantage. The pawn on e4 is further advanced in the centre. Black needs to keep White's pawns cemented

on light squares, if White's pawns migrate en-mass to the point where they are all on dark squares then Black's light-squared bishop wont have any targets.

Ideally Black needs to play his e pawn to e5, thus fixing White's pawns on light squares, when he will have a target rich environment for his light-squared bishop.

But Black goes wrong immediately.

Play continued:

29…a6?

This is a ruse on Black's part. He is hoping that his pawn advance on the queenside will trigger a like for like response on White's part and that White will react with 30.a4; this would be great for Black who would then play 30…a5, and White's pawn on a4 is fixed on a light square – great target practice for his light-squared bishop, but alas for Black, White appreciates the need to move his pawns onto dark squares and deprive the light-squared bishop of any fodder.

30.e5!

Consider the impact that this move has on Black.

It is very important in endgames to get the king into play; with White's pawn on e5, and his knight, combine to control a number of squares in the heart of Black's position – in particular the d6 and d7 squares are under White's control. It would now take Black five long tempos to bring his king to the off-centre c6 square. Black has to trek along the back rank with Kf8, e8, d8, c8, c7, and finally the king can make an appearance at the periphery centre with Kc6. White's king, by comparison, can arrive at the central d4 square in just three moves.

Black's 29…a6, was a self-inflicted wound.

30…Kf8

Black’s king begins the long journey

31.Kf2 Ke8 32.Ke3 Kd8 33.Kd4 Bf1 34.g3

Another White pawn moves to a dark square.

34…Kc7 35.f4

Now White has all his pawns on dark squares, consequentially there is nothing for Black’s light-squared bishop to get its teeth into.

35…Kc6 36.Ne4

The centralised knight grows in stature.

36…Be2 37.Nd6 f5?

Black was relying on this move to get his f pawn out of trouble, but there is a tactic that he has overlooked, incidentally the pawn on f5 is still on a light square.

38.exf6! gxf6 39.Ne4 f5

The advance of this pawn fixes Black’s pawn duo on light squares, and a gapping chasm has appeared on d6, a most welcome home for White’s king.

40.Nc3 Bf3 41.Ke5 Kd7 42.Na4

The knight goes to the edge of the board only to use the a4 square as a springboard to come back to the centre.

42…Be2 43.Nc5+

Black has too many weaknesses. White’s knight is far too agile for the Black bishop.

43…Kc6 44.Nxe6 Bg4 45.Nd4+ Kc5 46.Nxf5

Another pawn drops.

46…Kb5

Black hopes to make something happen in the queenside, but it is a forlorn hope.

47.Ne3

White could have taken the h6 pawn, but he wants to bring the knight back to counter Black's efforts on the queenside.

47…Bc8 48.f5 Bxf5

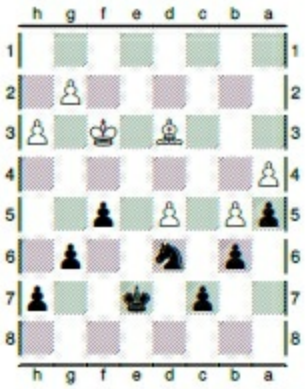
More or less forced.

49.Kxf5 Ka4 50.Nc4 Kb3 51.Nb6 Kxa3 52.Kg6 Kb4 53.Kxh6

Black plays on for a further eleven moves, but he is a dead man walking. The rest of the game is given below.

53…Kb5 54.g4 Kxb6 55.g5 a5 56.g6 a4 57.g7 a3 58.g8Q Kb5 59.h4 Kb4 60.h5 Kc3 61.Kg7 Kb2 62.h6 a2 63.Qxa2+ Kxa2 64.h7 1–0

Bingsley. L S.E Margate 1984



5.26 W

Here we have another endgame that features a contest between the knight and bishop.

There are a number of key features in this position, that already determine that the knight is better than the bishop.

White has fixed pawns on the same colour as his bishop. In particular the a4 pawn is backward and a ready-made target for a knight coming to c5. White also has an isolated pawn on d5, and Black has access to d6. This square is currently occupied by the knight but it is easy for Black to move the knight and put his king on d6, after which it will prove very difficult for White to maintain the d5 pawn. To make matters even worse for White he is a pawn down, and Black has a majority of three to two on the kingside.

This is already an uneven contest, it's just a matter of technique.

44.Kf4

White threatens to invade on the kingside with Kg5, and he gains control over the important e5 square, but this is only a temporary gain for White. Black can easily repel boarders, and White will soon run out of useful moves and have to cede ground.

44…Kf6 45.g4 fxg4 46.hxg4 g5+ 47.Kf3 h6

Black has placed his remaining pawns on the opposite colour sequence to White's bishop; the White bishop is denied any targets.

48.Bb1? Ke5 49.Ba2 Nc8 50.Ke3 Ne7

Black's knight sets out to harvest a White pawn.

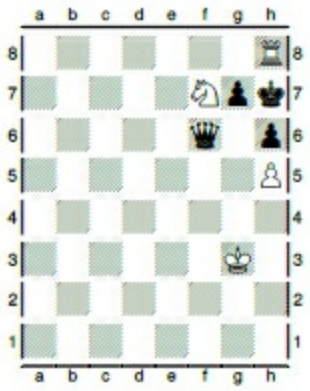
51.Kf3 Nxd5 52.Bxd5

Exchanging off into a king and pawn ending brings no solace to White, but he had little to no chance in this endgame and is now a second pawn down. In this instance the knight proved far superior to the bishop, and Black went on to win.

The rest of the game is given below.

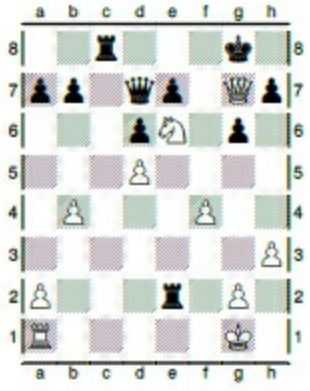
52…Kxd5 53.Ke3 Ke5 54.Kf3 Kd4 55.Kf2 Kc4 56.Ke3 Kb4 Fritz 11 SE: 57.Kd4 Kxa4 58.Kc4 Ka3 59.Kd5 Kb4 60.Ke4 Kxb5 61.Kf5 a4 62.Kg6 a3 63.Kxh6 a2 64.Kxg5 a1Q 65.Kf5 c5 66.Ke4 Qd4+ 67.Kf5 c4 68.g5 c3 69.g6 c2 70.g7 Qxg7 71.Ke4 c1Q -14.76/24 0–1

Aside from its great party tricks the knight can also provide support for other pieces and provide an assist in delivering checkmate.



5.27

In this position we see the knight lending vital support to the rook on h8, allowing the rook to deliver mate to the Black king.



5.28

In this example we see the knight supporting the queen, thus enabling checkmate from the queen.

From our examination of the knight, it is clear to see that this minor piece

is versatile and often deadly. The knight is best placed in the centre, and is at its worst on the side of the board. The knight can be a powerful positional asset that can exert long term pressure on our opponent's position, whilst its capacity to fork several pieces at once, and its unique smothered mate potential, lends this piece an awesome hitting power, that provides it with the ability to punch far above its own weight.

The Bishop

Bishops are reliant on a pawn moving before they can enter the game.

6.1 W

Many games commence in a classical fashion with 1.e4 e5, as above.

In this case each side has opened a diagonal for one of their respective bishops. White has opened the f1 – a6 diagonal for his bishop on f1, and Black has opened the a3 – f8 diagonal for his bishop on f8.

When 1d4 d5 is played we see that each side opens a diagonal for a bishop.

6.2 W

White has opened the c1 – h6 diagonal for his dark-squared bishop, and Black has opened the h3 – c8 diagonal for his light-squared bishop.

In classical terms, the open diagonals that bishops are presented with could well be described as the bishop's birthright, or inheritance. They are natural open lines for the bishop, and these open lines allow the respective bishops to enter the game.

It is typical in 1.e4 e5 openings to see bishops developed towards the centre; hence we might see the following deployment, see diagram 6.3.

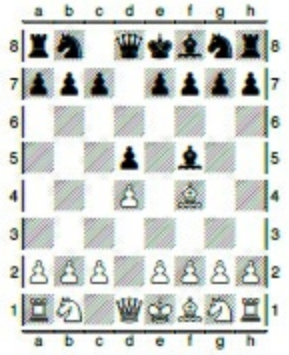
6.3 W

Bishops are long-range pieces and thrive on open lines, therefore, when we develop a bishop we should aim to place it on an effective diagonal.

In diagram 6.3, the bishops on c4 and c5 have almost doubled the number

of squares that they had access to on their starting blocks; not only does each bishop still enjoy the prime diagonal that is started with but now it has access to a second diagonal as well, this constitutes a major improvement for both bishops.

Likewise in a queen's pawn opening, we might see the bishops developed in a manner that increases their scope, see diagram 6.4.



6.4 W

A classical style of development often sees the bishops deployed in the centre of the board. The following diagrams provide examples of typical set-ups that you might expect to see.

6.5 W

6.6 W

6.7 W

6.8 W

The classical school of thought, however, has a rival which provides an alternative means of developing the bishops in the fashion of a fianchetto, see diagram 6.9.

6.9 W

I know we have bishops facing each other that are undefended, but this is for demonstration purposes only. The bishops cut a swathe across the board and have a far-reaching influence and an impact on the centre of the board.

Both methods of development are very popular and both systems have attracted the highest ranked players.

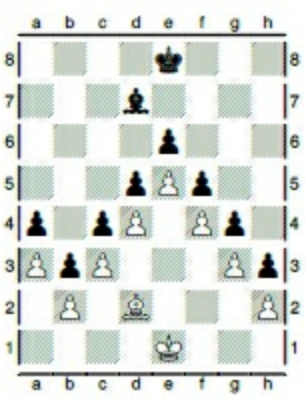
A combination of these two schools of thought can also be employed, it's a mater of taste.

What we want to avoid is developing our bishops in a negative manner. We don't want to see our bishops hemmed in by pawns and have a bishop that can't move, or has very restricted scope.

6.10 W

With pawns on c4, c5, e4 and e5, the respective bishops have virtually no scope whatsoever.

When bishops become limited in scope due to their own pawns being on the same colour sequence the bishop is described as a bad bishop, see diagram 6.11.



6.11 W

In the above example the respective bishops are stuck behind their own pawns, neither bishop can ever break free, they are entrenched in this prison for the rest of their lives.

What we do want is for our bishops is to have free-range, and be in positions in which they can make an impact on the game.

As bishops are long-range pieces that thrive on open lines; it is important when we have the bishop pair to open the game up. Probably the most effective means of opening up any game of chess is to exchange pawns, sacrificing a pawn, or pawns, is also an effective method of securing those all important open lines.

Conversely, when facing the bishop pair it is important to keep the game closed. In a closed position the bishops become stifled and they are effectively neutralised.

Accordingly there is often a struggle in which we see the side with the bishop pair trying to open the game and the side facing the bishop pair attempting to keep the game closed.

S.EJohnson. MWalsall1992

6.12 W

In diagram 6.12, Black has done well by placing a number of pawns on dark squares and boxing White's light-squared bishop in behind its own pawns.

White is not happy with this and immediately sets about trying to open the game for his bishop pair:

11.f4 Bb7 12.Ng3 Nbd7?

12…Nc6 was much the better move. This is a careless oversight that costs Black the important d6 pawn.

13.Nf5 Qd8 14.Nxd6 Ba6 15.fxe5 Ne8 16.Qg4 Bc8 17.Qg3 g6?

This is an unprovoked weakening of Black's position, the dark squares around his king are now suspect.

18.Bh6 Ng7 19.Rf3 Qe7 20.Raf1 f6?

This encourages more pawn exchanges and exposes the Black king even further.

21.Nxc8 Raxc8 22.exf6 Nxf6 23.e5

6.13 B

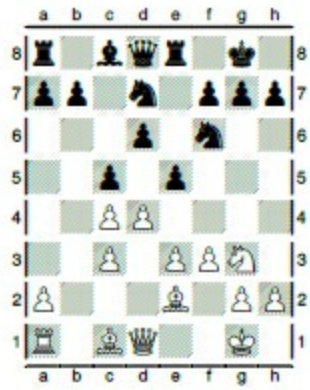
Both of White’s bishops now have access to the game, and White can establish a duo of passed pawns in the centre.

23…Nfh5?

Black panics and lashes out with his knight to attack White’s queen, this is very short-sighted. White’s queen is easily moved out of harms way, but not so for the knight, which is now stranded on the edge of the board, this piece has no retreat squares, and its days are numbered; with this in mind White simply exchanges in the f file and picks up the marooned knight.

24.Qf2 Qd8 25.Rxf8+ Qxf8 26.Qxf8+ Rxf8 27.Rxf8+ Kxf8 28.g4. Black resigns.

Botvinnik Keres Hague / Moscow 1948



6.14 B

It is customary for the side that has the bishop pair to fight for open lines for his bishops, but in the following example Black keeps helping White to gain these open avenues of attack.

11...cxd4? 12.cxd4 Nb6 13.Bb2 exd4? 14.e4

Black was relying on an exchange of pawns: 14.exd4 to open a line for his rook on e8, but Black's pawn on d4 is hostage to fortune and White will soon capture the d4 pawn thus enhancing his grip on the dark squares.

14…Be6 15.Rc1 Re7 16.Qxd4 Qc7?

Putting the queen on the same line as White's rook, not a good idea.

17.c5 dxc5 18.Rxc5 Qf4 19.Bc1 Qb8 20.Rg5 Nbd7 21.Rxg7+!

A killer blow that sucks the life out of Black's dark squares.

21…Kxg7 22.Nh5+ Kg6 23.Qe3

Black resigns as he cannot prevent mate on the dark squares. On the following pages we see a few more examples in which the bishop pair combines to great effect.

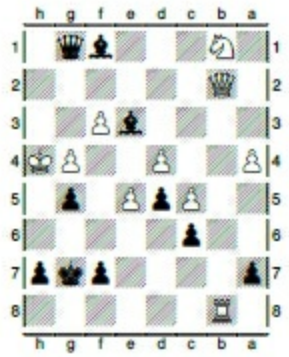
Brackner. P S.E Rhyl 2000

6.15 B

In the above example Black is the exchange down, but the bishop pair

gives him ample compensation. Black could, if he so wished, play 34…Bxb1, and he would have two minor pieces for a rook, but the bishops afford him a greater opportunity:

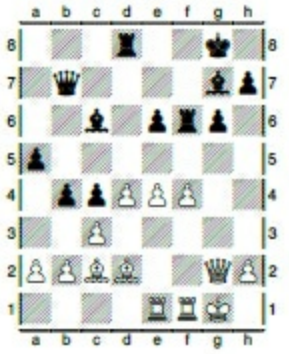
34…Be3 35.Rb8+ Kg7 36.Qb2 Qg1+ 37.Kh3 Bf1+ 38.Kh4 g5+



6.16 W

White resigns. After 39.Kh5, forced, White can only delay mate by giving up his queen, as Black plays 39…Qh1+, White interposes his queen with 40.Qh2, and 40…Qxh2, is mate.

S.E A .N. Other Internet 2000



6.17 W

White plays 27.f5 White has in mind 28.Bg5 winning the exchange.

27…exf5? 27…gxf5 was best.

Black ignores the threat in the hope of being able to make some tactical play with his bishop and queen battery on the h1 – a8 diagonal.

28.Bg5 fxe4 29.Bxf6 e3?

Black fools himself into believing that his queen and bishop battery will win the day, but now he is losing.

30.Qg5 h6 31.Qxg6 Be8 32.Qh7+

And Black resigns.

S.E A. N. Other Internet 2020

6.18 W

White takes advantage of the pin against the f7 pawn:

20.Qxg6+ Bg7 21.Ne4 White threatens 22.Nf6+, with mate to follow with 23.Qh7#.

21…Kh8 22.Qh5

The pin against the f7 pawn is broken so White moves his queen out of harms way, and creates a further pin against the h6 pawn.

22…Nb4 23.Ng5 Nc2

Winning the exchange for Black is neither here nor there.

24.Nxf7+ Rxf7 25.Bxf7 Nxe1 26.Rxe1 Bd7 27.Bc1

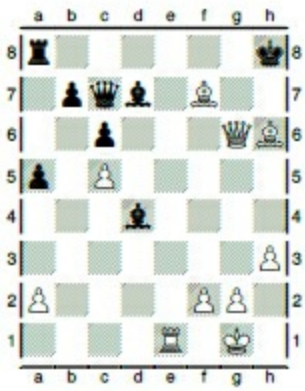
6.19 B

White brings his other bishop into play, and Black’s days are numbered.

27…Kh7

Black needs to defend the h6 pawn, but this only serves up his king on a plate.

28.Qg6+ Kh8 29.Bxh6 Bxd4



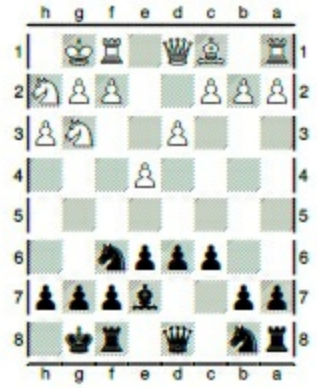
6.20 W

Now for the clever bit.

30.Bg7!+ Bxg7 31.Qh5+ Bh6 32.Qxh6# 1–0

All bishops are born equal, but as time marches on the nature of the position often changes, and equality can be eroded.

A. N. Other S.E Internet 2019

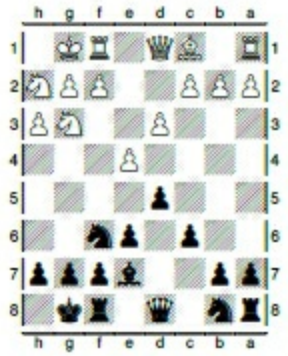


6.21 B

In diagram 6.21, the game is still in the opening phase. The light-squared bishops have already been exchanged leaving each side with just one bishop each: the dark-squared bishop.

The next two moves are very instructive. As things stand, Black's bishop is hemmed in by its pawn on d6. The pawn on d6 limits the scope of Black's bishop, and makes the bishop on e7 bad, therefore, Black advances the d6 pawn.

10…d5



6.22 W

The relationship between Black's pawns and his bishop has now fundamentally changed.

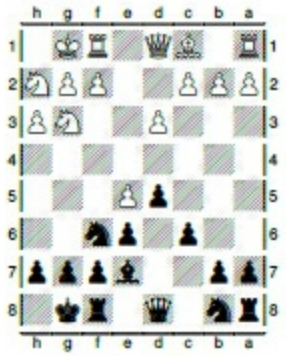
Black's bishop is no longer restricted and is a much better piece.

When a player has only one bishop remaining on board it is very important to put as many pawns as possible onto the opposite colour sequence to that of the bishop. The improvement for the bishop on e7 is immediate and obvious, and Black's position looks much more harmonious.

White too has a number of central pawns on the opposite colour sequence to that of his bishop, however, White starts to change this set-up.

11.e5

See diagram 6.23, on the next page.



6.23 B

This is a double-edged move. The benefit to White is that he gains space in the centre and shifts Black's well-placed knight on f6, but ultimately placing a central pawn on the same colour as his bishop may have a long-term detrimental impact. White may be intending to advance his f pawn and commence a pawn storm on the kingside, and this might prove to be a successful policy for him, only time will tell.

Nfd7 12.d4

White has both central pawns firmly lodged on dark squares. The fixed nature of the d4 pawn offers Black a target, and he hits out against White's centre with a flank pawn.

12…c5 13.c3

White barricades the centre.

13…cxd4 14.cxd4 Nc6 15.Be3?

This doesn't do White's bishop any favours at all, it is now a bad bishop.

15…b5

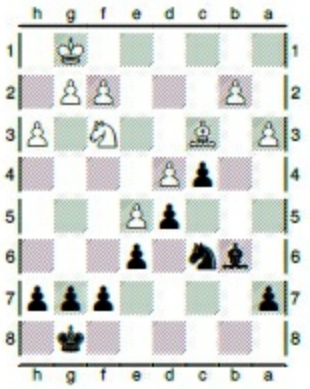
Black puts another pawn on a light square.

16.a3 And White places another pawn on a dark square.

16…Rc8 17.Qd2 Qb6

The fixed backward pawn on d4 becomes a liability to White, the pawn requires constant defense from White pieces and ties-up valuable resources. Black's ability to target this pawn and to maintain pressure against it affords Black an initiative.

If we fast-forward this game to move twenty-nine, we see that Black's initiative has carried forward to the endgame.



6.24 B

Black's remaining minor pieces combine to press against White's backward pawn on d4, conversely, White's minor pieces are tied to the defense of the sickly pawn, and White's bishop, if anything, has got worse.

Black now brings his king into the game and commences a long march to the queenside, and in the meantime he places all of his kingside pawns on light squares.

29…Kf8 30.Kf1 h6 31.Ke2 Ke7 32.Ke3 Kd7 33.Nd2 Kc7 34.f4 g6 35.h4 h5 36.g3 Kb7 37.Nf3 Ka6 38.Ng5

This ‘counterattack’ is not such a good idea. It is easy for Black to meet, and to defend against. White should keep his knight at its current post, and try to block entry for Black’s king to the queenside by bringing his king to c2, but instead of this White dances around on the kingside with his knight and ultimately wastes time.

38…Nd8 39.Nh7 Kb5 40.Ng5 Ka4 41.Nf3 Kb3 42.Nd2+?

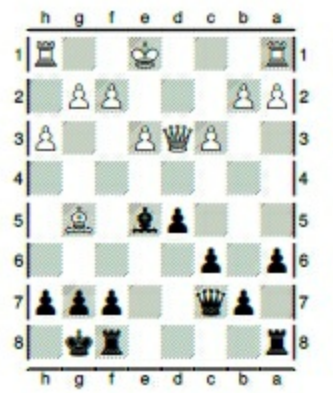
42.Kd2 secures the queenside from invasion by Black’s king, and the game will most likely end in a draw. The knight check leaves the door wide open to the Black king.

42…Kc2 43.Ke2 Nc6 44.Ke3 Ba5

Decisive, after the exchange of bishops White has no defense for his b2 pawn, and Black will mop up on the queenside.

45.Bxa5 Nxa5 46.Nf3 Nc6 47.Ng5 Nd8 48.a4 Kxb2 49.Kd2 c3+ 0–1

A. N. Other S.E Internet 2020



6.25 W

White’s bishop on g5 shouldn’t be a problem piece, but White’s next move changes that.

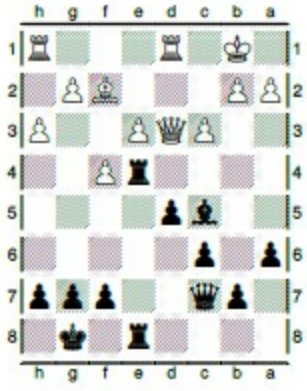
16.f4?

Ok, so this attacks Black’s bishop on e5 and gains a little bit of time and space, but at the expense of creating a backward pawn on e3, and White has to funnel his dark-squared bishop back to defend the weakness that he has created, and it’s not too long before he ends up with a bad bishop.

16…Bd6 17.Bh4 Rae8 18.0–0–0 Re4 19.Kb1 Rfe8 20.Bf2 Bc5

If we fast-forward this game by four moves we have the following position:

See diagram 6.26.



6.26 W

Black has all his central and queenside pawns on the opposite colour to that of his bishop, and this has allowed his bishop to easily navigate onto a more effective diagonal.

White's bishop, by contrast, is now a horrible piece; it is totally passive and has little to no scope.

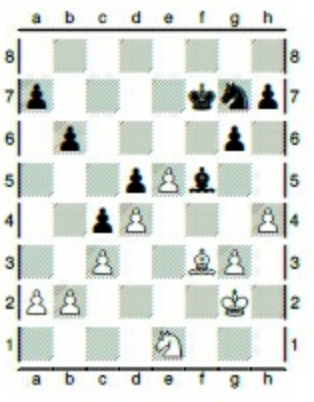
Black was easily able to gang up on the weakling on e3 and won that pawn, and went on to win the game.

S.E Hopkins. P Birmingham 2000

6.27 W

Here we see another example of a bad bishop. Black's bishop on b7 is stuck behind the pawn on d5. The positive thing about this from Black's point of view is that the bishop helps to influence the e4 square, but the negatives outweigh the positives.

In this game White won a pawn in the f file and managed to exchange off his dark-squared bishop for the Black counter part on g7, thus leaving Black with a poor bishop, if we fast forward a number of moves we have the following position, and it soon becomes apparent that the advantage continued into the endgame, this is a common theme in chess.



6.28 B

Black has managed to dig his bishop out from behind the d5 pawn, but the pawn on d5 will now be reliant on either the king advancing to e6 or the bishop retreating to e6, and Black's bishop still lacks a good bill of health.

Black opts for the king move.

33…Ke6

White now has the simple plan of 34.Kf2, 35.Ng2 and 36.Ne3. Black can play Ne8 and Nc7 holding the d5 pawn, but White can then advance his g pawn to g4, picking up the bishop on f5. Black would have to play his h pawn to h5, putting another pawn on a light square.

Play in the game saw Black exchanging the light-squared bishops, but he had to sell his bishop at the price of dropping a second pawn and White has an easy win, see below for the rest of the game.

34.Kf2 h6 35.Ng2 g5 36.Ne3 Be4? 37.Bxe4 dxe4 38.hxg5 hxg5 39.Nxc4 Nf5 40.Ne3 Nh6 41.a4 1–0

We are born with two bishops, and as long as we retain both bishops then we should, in theory, be safe on both colour sequences, black and white.

There are some occasions, however, when a bishop is exchanged for a knight. When this happens it is possible that a weakness may arise on the colour sequence of the bishop that has been exchanged.

It is important for the side that has exchanged bishop for knight to keep a weather eye on the colour sequence of the bishop that has been exchanged, and to maintain the security of that sequence.

If we view the other side of this coin the party that has had his knight exchanged for a bishop, should do the exact opposite and be watchful for weaknesses appearing on the colour sequence of the exchanged bishop, and should, where possible, try to force a weakness on that colour sequence.

S.E A. N. Other Internet 2018

6.29 B

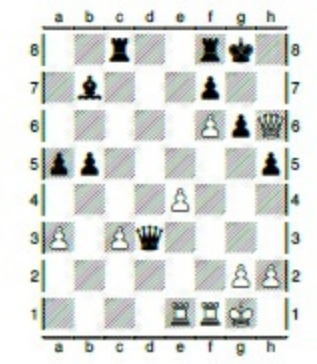
In the above position White has just played 22.Nh6+.

The very last response that Black should consider, and then reject, is 22… Bxh6?

But this is what Black played.

Black was motivated by a tactic, as after White plays 23.Qxh6, Black goes on to win the now undefended bishop on d3 with 23…Qxd3, and for a millisecond or two Black was happily patting himself on the back, and thinking of retiring to the bar where he could celebrate his great victory, but Black resigns after White's next move:

24.f6 See diagram 6.30.



6.30 B

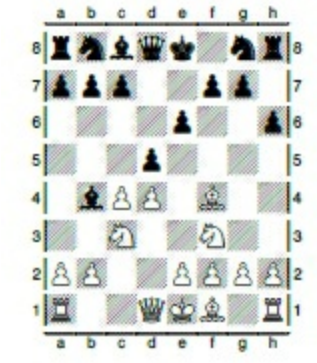
Black has won the battle but lost the war. He is unable to prevent White's queen coming to g7 and giving mate.

This is a stark example; Black was impetuous, and naïve, but these mistakes do happen.

Here are a couple of more examples when the exchange of bishop for knight produces a fatal weakness on the colour sequence of the exchanged bishop.

S.E A. N. Other Internet 2018

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Nf3 h6 5.Bf4



6.31 B

Black plays 5…Bxc3+?!

This is a dubious exchange.

Black is motivated by inflicting double pawns on White in the c file and claiming that he has brought about a structural weakness in White's camp, and this claim is true, but Black will now find it very difficult to barricade his dark squares. Black already has a number of pawns in the centre on light squares, and it will now be almost impossible for him to migrate the centre pawns to dark squares, and to make matters worse his remaining bishop is bad, as it is trapped behind the central pawns on light squares.

However, Black is not immediately punished as in the previous example, but White works on the vacuum that has been created on the dark squares.

The game continued:

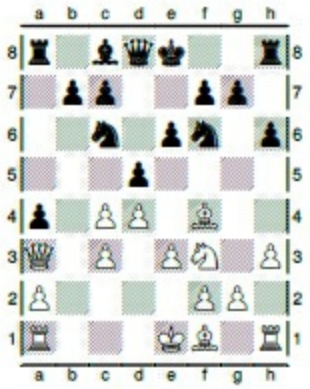
6.bxc3 Nf6 7.e3 Nc6!?

7…0-0, or perhaps 7…Nh5 were preferable.

8.h3 a5 9.Qb3 a4?

A damaging move which only serves to accelerate White's queen onto the square that it was aiming for, Black should have castled.

10.Qa3



6.32 B

Black now has telling weaknesses on the dark squares.

10…Bd7?

Black seems content to fiddle whilst Rome burns, better was 10…Ne7, covering the dark squares on the a3 – f8 diagonal and allowing him to castle next move.

11.Bd3 Na5?

This knight needed to come back to e7, but Black sees the possibility of winning the pawn on c4.

12.Nd2 dxc4 13.Nxc4 b5? 14.Ne5 Nc4 15.Nxc4 bxc4 16.Bxc4 Nd5 17.Bg3 c6 18.0–0 Ne7

Finally Black spots the move that allows him to castle, or does it?

19.Bd6 Nf5

Now 19…0-0, would drop the e7 knight.

20.Bc5 Ne7 21.e4 Bc8 22.f4

White sets about opening lines, and creating further weaknesses in Black’s camp.

22…Ba6 23.Bxa6 Rxa6 24.f5 exf5?

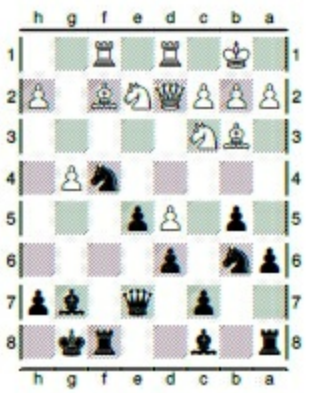
Opening the position favors White.

25.exf5 Ra8 26.Rae1

6.33 B

Black can't save his knight, and he can resign, but the game continued for ten more moves before Black finally threw in the towel.

Austin. C S.E Birmingham 1992



6.34 W

White to play in this position decided to exchange his bishop on f2 for Black's knight on b6:

18.Bxb6?

Not the best of moves considering that White's remaining bishop on b3 is a dunce. But not content with one questionable move White rushes head long into further errors. The game continued:

18…cxb6

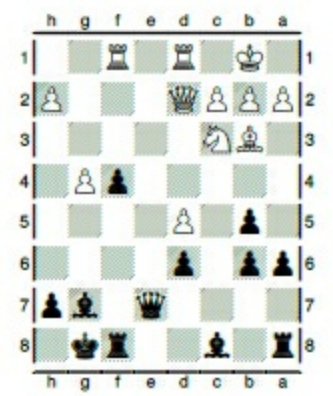
This gifts Black the half open c file - an open line pointing directly to White's king.

19.Nxf4?

White was probably thinking that after 19…exf4, he wins a pawn on f4 with 20.Rxf4, and so he could, but exchanging on f4 allows Black to recapture with his e pawn and this opens the diagonal for Black's bishop on g7.

19…exf4

See diagram 6.35.



6.35 W

White's exchanges have enhanced Black's position.

Not only has White gifted Black the half open c file, but he has facilitated the opening of the a1 – h8 diagonal for Black's bishop on g7, and this bishop is now uncontested by a White counter part and is an awesome power in the land.

If we fast forward this game by a half dozen moves we see that Black has now established a queen and bishop battery on the a1 – h8 diagonal and is in the process of winning a piece:

6.36 W

White’s knight on c3 is attacked by Black’s pawn on b4.

White can move his knight to a4 where it affords protection to the pawn on b2; if White has to surrender protection of the b2 pawn then Black swoops down with Qxb2#, but the knight on a4 will be hit again by Black advancing his b pawn to b5, and White must let the knight go, as he has to hold the b2 pawn and thus stave off checkmate.

White, however, has another resource:

22.g5

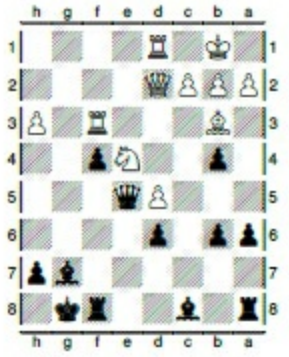
At the expense of a pawn White deflects Black’s queen. In fact opening the g file is good for White as he can seek to occupy this file with a rook, but in view of Black’s powerful bishop on g7, it seems that White is already living on borrowed time.

The game continued: 22…Qxg5 23.Ne4?

23.Ne2 was far better. White gains only a temporary reprieve by this move.

23…Qe5

Black re-introduces the queen and bishop battery thus renewing the threat of mate on b2, and he hits the knight on e4.



6.37 W

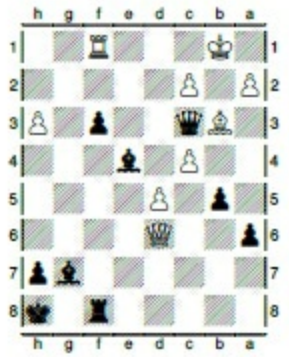
White is obliged to lay down the life of the knight and return the piece to c3 in order to save his king.

24.Nc3

White could resign, but hope springs eternal.

The game continued: 24...bxc3 25.bxc3 Bd7

After a further eighteen moves of play we have the following position:



6.38 W

White has fought a losing battle but has managed to avoid being checkmated, but he is materiel down and Black's queen and bishop battery combine to threaten mate on b2, the dark square weakness that has haunted

White ever since 18.Bxb6?

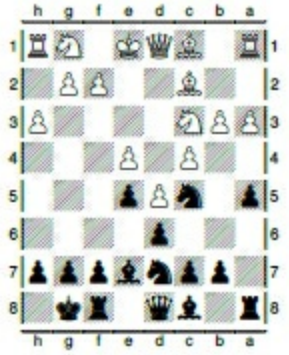
White limps on for two more moves before succumbing to the inevitable.

44.Kc1 bxc4 45.Rg1 cxb3

45…Qe3+ forking the rook and king was also possible, but here White resigns.

We have seen that there are instances in which one side or the other ends up with a bad bishop. When faced with such a situation it is highly desirable to exchange off the bad bishop for a good bishop in the opponent's camp.

Clare. S S.E Rhyl 2018



6.39 B

In this position Black plays: 11…Bg5

White does best to respond with 12.Bb2, keeping his dark-squared bishop on board, but instead he allows the exchange of bishops:

12.Nge2 Bxc1 13.Rxc1

White is saddled with a bad light-squared bishop, whereas Black's light-squared bishop is a good piece, so Black has brought about a situation in which he has a good bishop against a bad bishop, a strategic victory for Black.

6.40 B

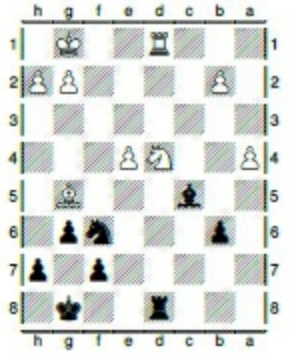
In this position it is clear to see that White's bishop on d3 is the jewel in his crown, but Black rains on his parade:

7…Ba6

White must face the exchange of his powerful bishop on d3 or give up the exchange. Black has succeeded in trading a strategically important White piece.

Finally, let's round up our examination of the bishop with some examples of the bishop in tactical play.

Cheshire. D S.E Birmingham 2001



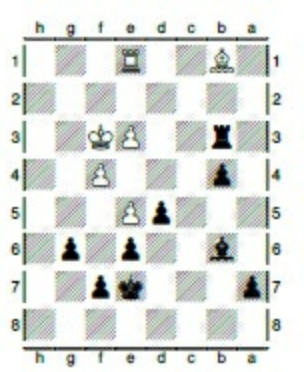
6.41 B

Black plays 31…Rxd4!

White cannot avoid the loss of materiel:

On 32.Rxd4 Black plays 32…Bxd4+ and the bishop on d4 protects the knight on f6, whilst 32.Bxf6 drops the rook on d1 with 32…Rxd1+ and Black is up a whole rook.

Jose. Y. R. H S.E Gibraltar 2014



6.42 B

Black plays 35…Bxe3.

White's rook is overworked; it has to protect both the pawn on e3 and the bishop on b1. If White plays 36.Rxe3 then he drops a pawn as Black takes the now undefended bishop on b1, so instead of this White plays: 36.Kg4?

But this is probably worse as Black is now able to take advantage of White's rook on e1 being on a dark square, the same colour as his bishop, Black plays:

36…Bf2 37.Rc1 Rg3+ Forcing the White king to a dark square:

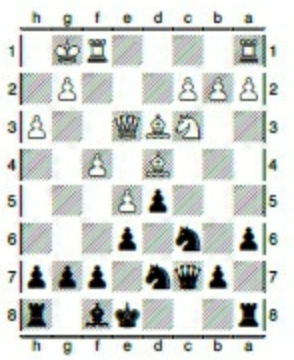
38.Kh4

Black finishes the game with a discovered check from the bishop with

38…Rc3+

Picking up White's rook on c1, game over.

Lloyd. S S.E Blackpool 2009



6.43 B

White has an open diagonal leading to his king on the g1 – a7 line. He may feel safe as both the bishop on d4 and the queen on e3 stand guard on this line, but Black strips away the illusion of safety:

14…Nxd4 15.Qxd4

And Black wins the White queen for his bishop:

15…Bc5.

S.E Cleg. R Crewe 2001

6.44 W

Black has just played his king to d8 to lend support to the rook on e8, but

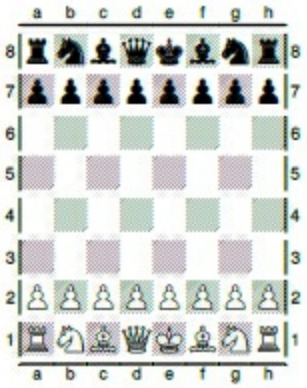
White shows Black the error of his ways:

30.Bc7+!

Black must respond to the check and this means moving his king away from the defense of the rook on e8 and White wins the exchange.

The bishop is a piece that thrives in open positions and needs open lines to be most effective. If we have a bishop trapped behind its own pawns it can prove to be a liability. The bishop, like its cousin, the knight can be a game winning piece due to its tactical prowess in skewering and pinning our opponent's pieces.

The Rook



7.1 W

Unlike the knight and the bishop, the rook is a major piece, and is considered to be worth five pawns.

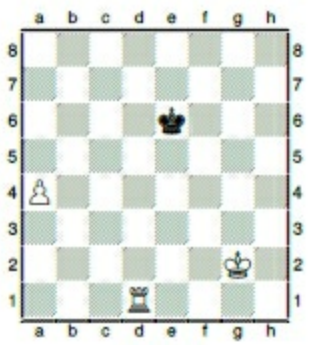
Initially it is not easy to understand why the rook should be considered as a major piece and, therefore, of more value than a bishop or a knight. Does a piece that operates on the rank and file outweigh a piece that operates on the diagonal? If so, and it appears to be the case, then we must assume that the rank and file is more important than the diagonal; but this clearly isn't the case. A well-placed bishop can be worth much more than a rook, and similarly a knight that is poised to deliver a family fork can be considered of more value than a rook that can't get off the first rank.

What is it then that makes the rook worth more than a knight or a bishop? The bishop is restricted to the number of squares that it has access to by virtue of its adherence to just one colour. Even in the best of scenarios a bishop can only ever visit half of the board, whereas the rook has access to all of the board. Clearly this is a major advantage for the rook that makes it superior to the comparatively limited bishop.

A lone rook and king can deliver mate to a lone king. A lone bishop and king can't mate the lone king, that's two points in favour of the rook, and these two points provide an insight as to why the rook is generally better than a bishop. Of course much depends on the nature of a given position, but on

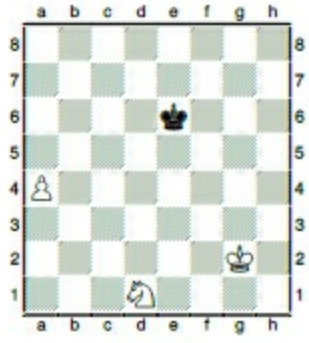
the whole a rook is better than a bishop.

In what respect then is the rook better than a knight? A rook can influence any number of squares on a rank or file, a knight can't do this, knights are much more restricted in their scope. Consider the following position, see diagram 7.2:



7.2 W

In the above position the rook on d1 cuts off the Black king from the queenside. The coronation of the passed pawn in the a file is assured. If we replace the rook on d1 with a knight, it's an entirely different proposition for White to advance his passed pawn and win the game.



7.3 W

Engines maintain that White will still promote his passed pawn, but it's far deeper, more involved and technical than the simple win that White has with the rook; and again the lone knight and king can't deliver checkmate to the lone king. In our first example, diagram 7.2, White didn't have to promote the passed pawn to win the game, but without being able to promote in diagram 7.3, White can only draw.

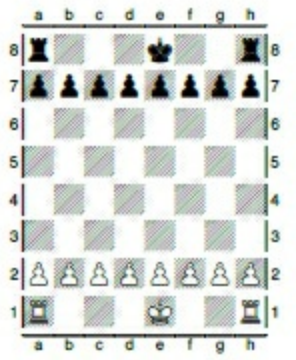
Like the bishop, the rook enjoys life in the open line, but due to their starting position in the corners of the board, it proves difficult to bring the rooks into play.

An examination of six popular openings reveals that on average it takes fifteen moves before a rook, from either side, sees the light of day, that is to say when the rook has unrestricted access to the board, with none of its own pawns or pieces in front of it.

No other piece takes so long to deploy as the rook does. The knight can be developed on move one, with 1.Nf3 Nc6. The bishop can find entry as early as move two: 1.e4 e5 2.Bc4 Bc5, but not so for the rook.

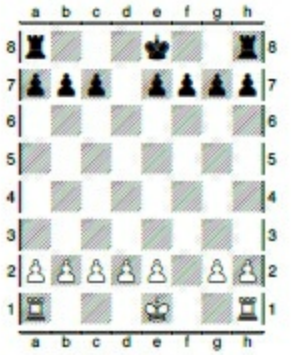
Rooks are attracted to open and half open files as iron filings to a magnet; and these lines are the natural home of the rook. In order for the rook to flourish then we must have a half open or open file, and the most effective means of obtaining these open lines is by exchanging pawns.

Take the following positions, for example:



7.4 W

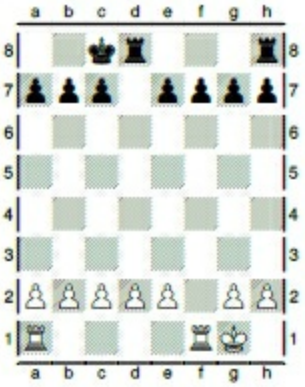
In the above position the rooks have no means of getting into the game. However, if we make two or three pawn moves and a pawn or two is exchanged then the rooks have a natural opening that they are able to gravitate towards:



7.5 W

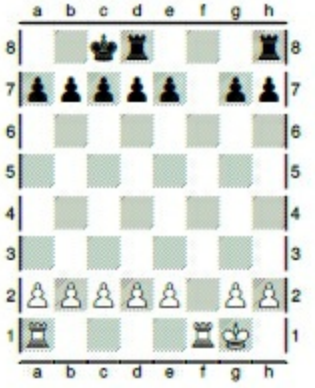
In diagram 7.5, White has the half open f file. A half open file is a file that is not completely open, but it is open from just one side. Black has the half open d file.

If White were to castle short and Black castles long, as in diagram 7.6, then both rooks would automatically have an open line to operate on:



7.6 W

White's rook is active in the half open f file and can take the pawn on f7, and Black's rook is active in the d file and can take the d2 pawn.



7.7 W

In the position above there is an open f file. The open file is characterised by a lack of any pawns in the file. In cases such as this it is of great benefit to control the open file by posting a rook on that line. White's rook on f1 has undisputed ownership of the f file and he can feed his rook into Black's position with 1.Rf7. White would then have a marked advantage as he can take either the e7 or g7 pawn, thus winning materiel.

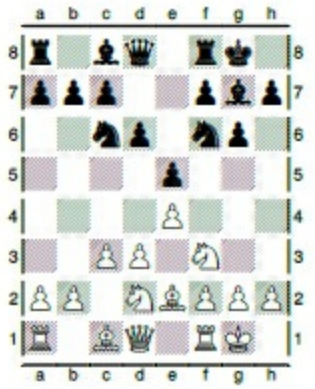
More often than not, however, these open files are contested and if it were Black to move in diagram 7.7, he would place one of his rooks in the f file on f8. This would present a challenge to White's rook on f1. White no longer has undisputed control of the open file, and most likely the rooks would be exchanged in the f file.

Open lines are not always available to the rook; this does not mean, however, that the rook is idle; on these occasions it is anticipated that a particular file has the potential to become an open or half open file, and consequentially that our well placed rook will make a telling impact on the game in the near future.

Let's view a sample game and see what role the rook/s plays in this game.

S.EGibson. PScarborough2001

1.Nf3 Nc6 2.e4 e5 3.d3 g6 4.Be2 Bg7 5.Nbd2 d6 6.c3 Nf6 7.0–0 0–0



7.8 W

Both side have castled. This move ushers in a major change for the respective rooks. The specialized castling move brings the rook away from the corner of the board and the rook is now placed closer to the centre of the board; as yet the rook remains inactive, playing only a bit part in shoring up the respective f pawns for each side and thereby contributing towards the defense of the castled king, but this is not a job that the rook enjoys. The rook yearns for open space.

8.Re1

White's rook takes a step closer to the centre.

8…Nh5 9.b3 Nf4 10.Bf1

7.9 B

By withdrawing the bishop to f1 White extends the scope of the rook, but given the closed nature of the game the rook remains a prisoner of its own

pawns and its view of the world is limited by the pawn on e4.

Black in the meantime has invested tempo in bringing his knight to an aggressive square – f4, but it has cost him three tempos to do this, however, the knight is well placed and White cannot easily evict this piece.

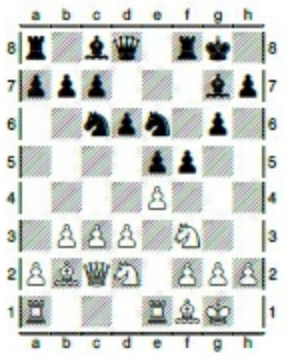
10…f5

Black lashes out on the kingside, there is now a line opening possibility of a pawn exchange.

11.Bb2 Ne6

Black clears the way for his f pawn to advance.

12.Qc2



7.10 B

White completes his development. There now exists a clear line of communication between White's rooks on the first rank.

12…fxe4?!

Exchanging pawns is hasty on Black's part; his sole motivation appears to be opening a line for his rook on f8, but I wonder if he has stopped to consider that the pawn exchanges which he has ushered in also allows White to activate a rook.

In the short-term, however, Black succeeds in opening a line for his f8

rook, this rook now has a far better view of proceedings, but it can't win the game on its own.

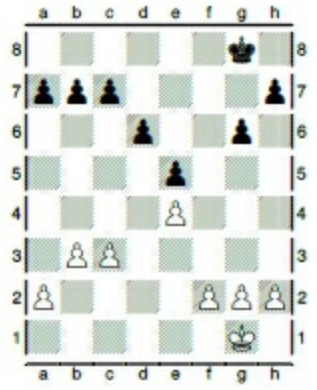
13.dxe4

7.11 B

Here we see a fundamental change in the position that has far-reaching consequences for the respective rooks.

As previously stated pawn exchanges bring about the opening of files; this is bread and water for the rooks. The open files that are created as a result of the pawn exchanges are the natural habitat for a rook.

If we remove the pieces and view the pawn structure we can see this more clearly.

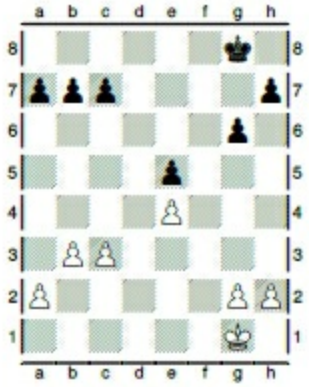


7.12

In the above diagram we can see that Black has a half open f file and that

White has a half open d file.

If the f2 and d6 pawns were absent, then the f and d files would be open files, see diagram 7.13.



7.13

Returning to the game.

13…Nf4?!

Black invests more tempo in moving the same piece for the fifth time, as a result of this indulgence with the knight other Black pieces remain fixed on the first rank, still on their starting blocks. Black is in danger of falling behind in development

14.Rad1

7.14 B

White's a1 rook makes an appearance in the d file. The rook is full of promise in this line, and White has achieved a much sort after platform of centralised rooks.

14…Bg4 15.b4 a6 16.a4 Ne7?! 17.c4 c6?!

This allows White to open the game for his better-placed pieces.

18.c5 d5 19.Qb3 Qc7 20.h3 Be6 21.exd5 Bxd5 22.Bc4 Nf5 23.Bxd5+ Nxd5 24.Bxe5

White has won a pawn, and his centralised rooks are growing in stature.

24…Bxe5 25.Nxe5 Rae8

It's about time that Black got this rook into the game. Black has centralised his rooks, but the f8 rook should have come to the e file, it is doing next to nothing in the f file.

26.Nef3 Qg7 27.Ng5 Qf6?!

Black is hoping to capitalize on his queen and rook battery in the f file, but he only succeeds in making a target of his own queen.

28.Nge4 Qh4?!

Again presenting a target of his queen. Black is basing everything on his hopes in the f file against White's pawn on f2, this is naïve, and short-sighted.

29.Nf3 Qf4?

Black Overlooks a tactical shot by White.

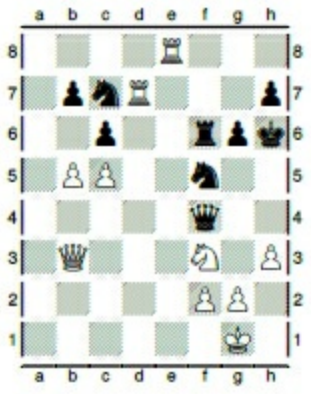
30.Nf6+ Rxf6 31.Rxe8+ Kg7 32.b5 axb5 33.axb5 Nc7?

Black is only concerned to attack the White rook on e8, but what he fails to appreciate is that in moving the knight from its well placed perch in the centre he has opened the door for White's rook in the d file to enter the game, and the rook isn't going to wait around for a written invite.

34.Rd7+

Now that White’s other rook has entered the fray it is the end for Black.

34…Kh6



7.15 W

Black’s king looks safe here, but White has an array of lethal firepower in the shape of his major pieces, and a storm is about to break on Black’s king.

35.Rxh7+! Kxh7 36.Qg8+ Kh6 37.Qh8#

As previously stated, it takes a while for the rooks to come into the game, but once they have free access they are often able to invade the opponent’s position, and then rooks prove their worth, and their regicidal tendencies.

When we have a rook operating on a half open file we want to put pressure on the pawn in our opponent’s camp that stands on the same file as our rook; ultimately with the idea of winning that pawn, or exerting a strong press on our opponent’s position.

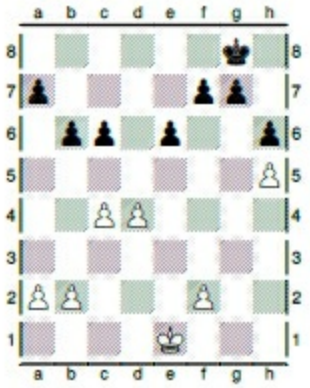
Let’s look at some examples of this theme.

S.EA. N. OtherInternet2020

7.16 W

In the above position both sides have a half open file. White has the half open g and e files, and Black has the half open d file.

Let’s look at the pawn structure:



7.17

The respective half open files provide a natural habitat for the major pieces - the rooks and the queen.

In this position Black has made a fundamental mistake of castling kingside; effectively Black is castling into an attack.

Returning to the game.

White immediately puts a rook in the half open g file, on the same line as Black’s king.

19.Rg1

The rook is aggressively placed, but this is only the beginning. White must reinforce the g1 rook, ideally White needs to load the g file with all of his major pieces and that means bringing his a1 rook and the queen to bear in the half open g file; if White can succeed in doing this then he will have a significant advantage and Black will be hard pressed to defend the position of his king.

Play continued:

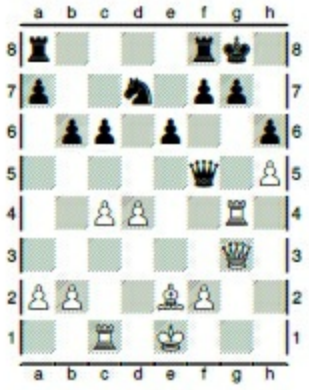
19…Bxc1?

This doesn't help Black as it only brings White's a1 rook into play.

20.Rxc1 Qe4?

Black's desire to attack White's d4 pawn only succeeds in making a target of his queen:

21.Rg4 Qf5 22.Qb3 Nd7 23.Qg3



7.18 B

White has two major pieces lined up in the g file and threatens to play 24.Rxg7+, Black must defend.

23…Qf6 24.Bd3 Rad8 25.Kd2

White has cleared the way for his c1 rook to enter the g file.

25…c5

Black urgently seeks to open lines against White's king, but it's too late.

26.Rg1 Kh8?

This offers no defence, best for Black was 26…g5, but the situation is still massively in White's favour.

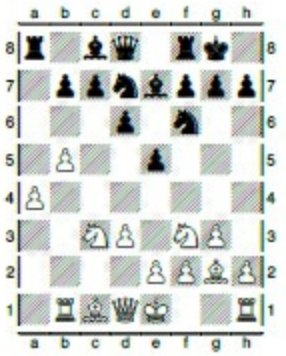
27.Rxg7 Rg8?

Capitulation.

28.Rh7#

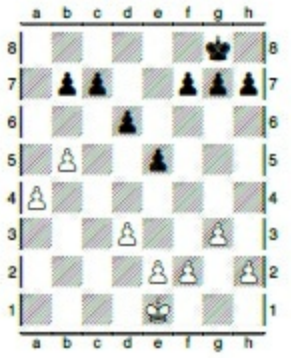
White could also have continued with 28.Rxg8+ Rxg8 and 29.Qxg8#, but 28.Rh7# is quicker.

S.E A. N. Other Internet 2019



7.19 B

Both sides have a half open file. Let's view the pawn structure:



7.20

White has the half open c file and Black has the half open a file.

Both sides now have a natural target in their respective half open files. Black already targets the White pawn on a4, and White can take aim at the Black pawn on c7; again these half open files form a natural home for the major pieces.

Both sides, however, still need to develop and the idea of putting immediate pressure on the respective pawns may have to be shelved in the short-term.

11…Rb8?!

Black doesn't want to leave his rook on the same diagonal as White's bishop on g2, but he could have commenced a press against White's pawn on a4 with 11…Nc5, but Black puts this idea on the back boiler to developing his light-squared bishop with the view to challenging White's bishop on g2.

12.0–0 b6

7.21 W

Black's idea of developing his bishop to b7 creates an ugly looking backward pawn on c7, this is now a long-term fixed weakness and White will soon turn his attention towards this ugly duckling.

13.Nd2 Bb7 14.Nde4 Nxe4 15.Nxe4 Nf6 16.Nxf6+ Bxf6 17.Qb3 Bxg2 18.Kxg2 Ra8

Black brings the White pawn on a4 under observation.

19.Be3 g6 20.Rfc1 Bg7 21.Rc6

An ideal blockading square for White's rook.

21…Qe7 22.Rbc1

White intensifies the pressure against Black's pawn on c7.

22…Rfc8?

Black makes a basic mistake and as a consequence White chops off the b6 pawn.

23.Bxb6

Black can't take the bishop on b6 without suffering the loss of the exchange, but he now seems to panic and looks to exchange queens, not a good idea when you've just gone down a pawn.

23…Qe6 24.Qxe6 fxe6 25.Rxc7

White wins a second pawn.

25…Rxc7 26.Rxc7 Rxa4

Black gets a pawn back, but the damage has already been done, and White's passed pawn in the b file will prove to be Black's undoing.

27.Rb7 Rb4 28.Bc7 Bf8 29.b6 d5 30.Rb8 Kf7

7.22 W

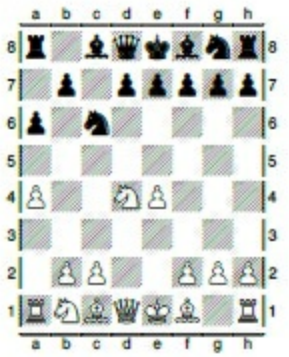
White has a simplistic but effective tactical means of putting the issue beyond doubt.

31.Rxf8+ Kxf8 32.Bd6+ Kf7 33.Bxb4 1–0

Sometimes, however, the issue is not straightforward and a significant amount of manoeuvring must be undertaken.

S.E Farthing. A Birmingham 2004

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 a6 3.a4 Nc6 4.d4 cxd4 5.Nxd4

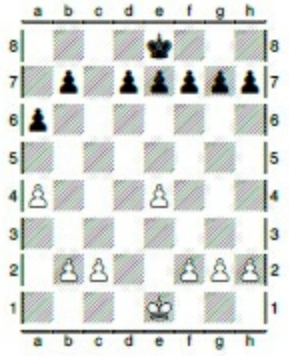


7.23 B

The opening system employed here is a Sicilian, and typical of this defense there has been an early exchange of pawns. Black has exchanged his off centre pawn on c5 for White's central d4 pawn, this creates an asymmetrical imbalance in the respective pawn structures.

As a result of this exchange of pawns White has a majority of three pawns on the queenside to Black's two, whereas Black has a majority of two pawns in the centre to White's one.

This pawn exchange also creates a half open file for both sides. White has a half open d file, and Black has a half open c file, let's view this minus the pieces:

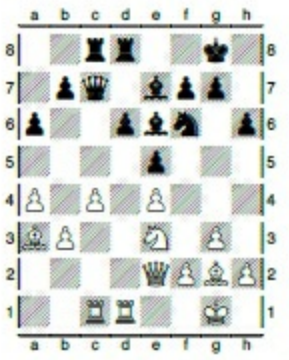


7.24

Both sides will seek to occupy their respective half open files with major pieces.

If we fast-forward this game to move nineteen we see that Black has

placed his queen and rook in the half open c file, and that White has posted a rook in his half open d file.



7.25 B

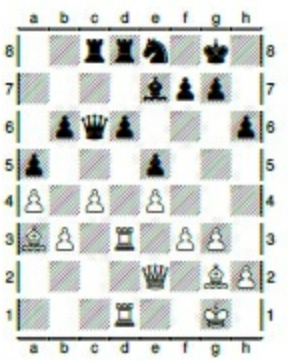
White stands better.

White has established a bind on the central d5 square, and White's pieces combine to reinforce his grip on this square. Black would love to advance his d pawn to d5, but White's grip on the d5 square is too strong, as a consequence Black's pawn on d6 is backward and presents a natural target for the White pieces in the d file.

Black must try to break the bind that White has on the d5 square, and his best means of doing this is a flanking blow against White's centre with an advance of his f pawn, or he might arrange to advance the b pawn to b5, even sacrificing a pawn if necessary, but he would have to move his queen away from the c file first as White currently has a rook stationed on this file.

The fact that White has a natural target in his half open file and Black has no bite in his half open file is a significant difference between the two sides. If White can increase the pressure against Black's backward pawn on d6 and win this pawn then he will have a significant advantage.

Let's fast forward again to move twenty-five, and view the game at this point.



7.26 W

We can see that Black has made no effort to break White's bind, and instead he is content to sit back and defend his one weak point – the backward pawn on d6.

White has failed, so far, in his endeavors to win the weak pawn on d6; as things stand White has three attacking units lined up against the d6 pawn – his doubled rooks in the d file and the bishop on a3. White could add another attacking unit by bringing his queen into the d file, but that would be the maximum strength that White can bring to bear, and unfortunately for him, Black has sufficient resources to meet White's attack against his one and only weakness – the d6 pawn.

With the d6 pawn secure Black could simply move his king from side to side with Kf8, Kg8, Kf8, Kg8, and challenge White to break through.

If White is to make progress he must find a means of creating a second weakness in Black's camp.

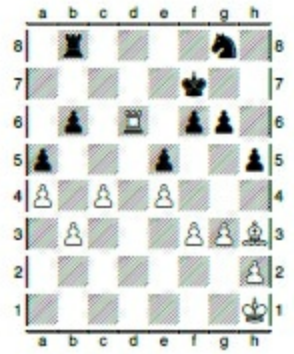
So White embarks on a probing mission – feinting an attack against Black's pawn on b6, and hinting at a pawn push in the f file. White is happy to spend time manoeuvring in a bid to discover or force a second front on Black, and thereby to stretch Black's resources.

Black seems to tire and makes a mistake, he losses cohesion and removes a vital defender, the knight, too far away from the d6 pawn, and eventually on move forty five White returns to his original target – Black's weak pawn on d6.

26.Bc1 Qc7 27.Be3 Rb8 28.Qd2 Kh7 29.Kh1 Nf6 30.Qf2 Kg8 31.Qd2 Kh7 32.Bh3 Ng8 33.Bf5+ g6 34.Bh3 Kg7 35.Qf2 Nf6 36.Rf1 Rf8 37.Bg2 Ng8 38.Rfd1 Rfd8 39.Bc1 Qc5 40.Qd2 f6?! 41.Bh3 Kf7 42.Rd5 Qc7 43.Rb5 Qb7 44.Ba3 Qc6, see diagram 7.27, on the next page.

7.27 W

45.Qd5+ Qxd5 46.Rbxd5 h5 47.Bxd6 Bxd6 48.Rxd6 Rxd6 49.Rxd6



7.28 B

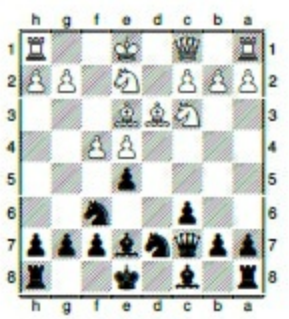
The damage is done. White has won a vital pawn, but it took a further twenty-one moves to finally extinguish Black's resistance. The rest of the game is given below.

49…Ke7 50.Rd5 Rd8 51.Kg1 Rd6 52.Kf2 Nh6 53.Ke3 g5 54.Kd3 Nf7 55.Kc3 Nd8 56.b4 axb4+ 57.Kxb4 Nc6+ 58.Kc3 Nd4 59.Bg2 Kd7 60.Kb4 Kc7 61.c5 bxc5+ 62.Rxc5+ Rc6? 63.Rxc6+ Nxc6+ 64.Kc5 Na5 65.Kd5 Kd7 66.Bh3+ Ke7 67.Kc5 Kd8 68.Kd6 Nb7+ 69.Ke6 g4 70.fxg4 1–0

When there is just one open file on the board both sides will contest ownership of this line, and more often than not we see an exchange of rooks in these open files.

An open file must not be ignored. If one side is successful in gaining control of an open file he may use that line as a highway, and channel his major pieces into the heart of the opponent's position and wreak havoc, see the next position for an example of this theme.

Riddock. A S.E Halifax British Rapid 2011



7.29 W

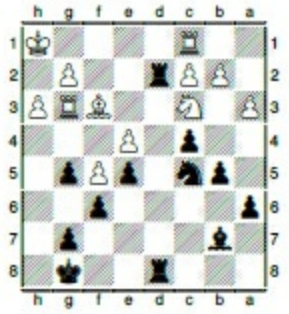
As the result of a pawn exchange the d file is opened, and play continued:

10.f5 b5 11.a3 Bb7 12.Qd2 a6 13.h3 c5 14.Ng3 c4 15.Be2 0–0 16.0–0 Rad8 17.Qc1

The arrival of Black's rook in the d file encourages White to remove his queen from the open line, but this concedes ownership of the d file to Black: 17.Qc1 Bc5 18.Kh2 Bxe3 19.Qxe3 Qc5 20.Qg5 h6 21.Qh4 Qe3

Black's queen makes an appearance in the heart of White's position and influences the d file.

22.Bf3 Qd2 23.Rac1 Nc5 24.Nh5 Nxh5 25.Qxh5?! Qf4+ 26.Kh1 Rd2 27.Be2 Qe3 28.Rf3 Qg5 29.Qxg5 hxg5 30.Rg3 f6 31.Bf3 Rfd8



7.30 W

Black consolidates his grip on the open d file.

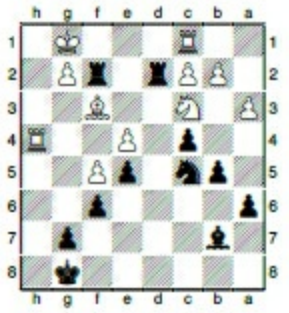
White's position is full of weaknesses. His knight and bishop are tied to the defense of the e4 pawn and his rook on c1 is spending its time defending the c2 pawn. White is reduced to passive defence; his rook on g3 is the only glimmer of hope, but that is not exactly a shining beacon.

32.Rg4 R8d4

Now White's rook in the g file is also being used for defence.

33.h4 gxh4 34.Rxh4 Rf2

Black gets set to broaden the bridgehead and will soon bring his other rook to bear on White's second rank. 35.Kg1 Rdd2



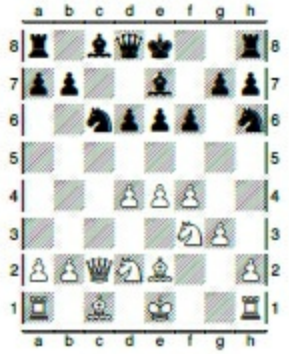
7.31 W

Now something in White's camp must fall, as White cannot successfully defend the e4 and c2 pawns.

36.Nd1 Rxc2 37.Rb1 Rfd2 38.Kf1 Nd3 39.Ne3 Rxb2 40.Rxb2 Rxb2

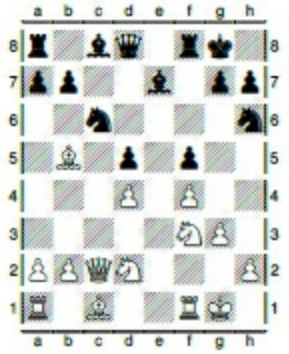
Black grabs a second pawn, and has a passed pawn in the c file. The advance of this pawn proves decisive: 41.Nd5 Ra2 42.Nc7 c3 43.Bd1 c2 0–1

S.E A. N. Other Internet 2001



7.32 B

In diagram 7.32, the c file is open to both sides. The game continued: 11…0–0 12.0–0 f5 13.Bc4 d5 14.exd5 exd5 15.Bb5



7.33 B

A second open file, the e line, comes into being.

15…Bd7 16.Bxc6 Bxc6 17.Ne5 Be8 18.Qb3 b6 19.Ndf3 Ng4 20.h3 Nxe5 21.Nxe5 Rf6 22.Bd2 Rh6

The rook lift to h6 is an interesting idea, but the rook is working on its own and Black runs the risk of not being able to compete on the open files.

23.Kg2 Bf6 24.Rfe1 a6 25.Rac1

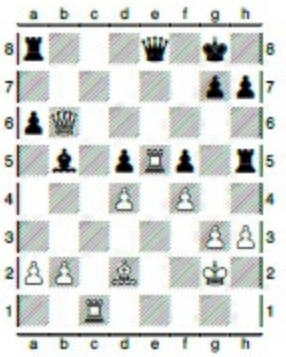
7.34 B

White has a rook on both open files.

25…Bb5 26.Qc2

Black cannot contest the c file, and White is able to effect an invasion of Black's position.

26…Rh5 27.Qc7 Qe8 28.Qxb6 Bxe5 29.Rxe5



7.35 B

Black has not only lost the c file, but now the e file is forfeit.

It is interesting at this point to compare the placement of White's rooks with that of Black's rooks.

Black's rook in the h file is a non-contributory factor. Black has allowed himself to be seduced into believing that he can make something happen in the h file, but if the rook is to produce any real threat it needs support from

another piece and this looks very unlikely.

Black’s rook on a8 has not moved, and like its colleague on h5 the a8 rook is doing nothing. 29…Qf7 30.Rc7 Qf8 31.Ree7

7.36 B

White consolidates his grip on Black’s second rank, and Black faces a very difficult defensive task.

31…g6

This exposes Black’s king, and gives White opens lines, enabling his queen to take aim at the Black king.

32.Qe6+ Kh8 33.Qe5+

White’s major pieces now overwhelm Black’s king.

33…Kg8 34.Rg7+ Kh8 35.Rxh7++ (double check) Kg8 36.Qh8# 1–0

Black’s rook on a8 never moved from its original billet.

S. E A. N. Other Internet 2021

1.Nf3 e6 2.d4 d5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 Nbd7 5.c4 c5 6.0–0

7.37 B

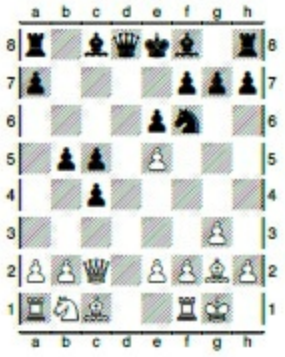
Given the degree of tension between the two sets of pawns in the centre an exchange looks highly likely.

6…dxc4?

This gives rise to a half open d file for Black and a half open c file for White, but Black has given up the centre ground without sufficient justification.

7.Qc2 b5 8.Ne5?! Nxe5 9.dxe5

See diagram 7.38.



7.38 B

This exchange opens the d file.

9…Nd5

Black has the time to slam the door shut, both on the d file and to White's bishop on g2, thus safeguarding his a8 rook.

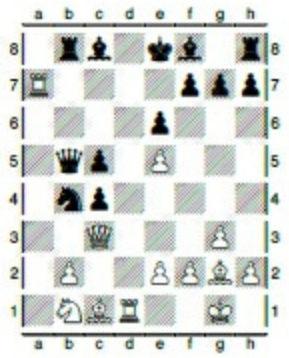
10.Rd1

White puts a rook on the open file.

10…Qb6 11.a4

White challenges Black's massed pawns on the queenside, and prepares to open the a file.

11…Nb4 12.Qc3 Rb8? 13.axb5 Qxb5 14.Rxa7



7.39 B

White takes advantage of the opportunity to win the a7 pawn and to activate his rook. White's rook on a7 now scorches Black's second rank, and there is a possibility of White developing his bishop to g5, taking aim at the weak d8 square.

Black has a lot of catching up to do.

14…Be7?

14…Nd5 keeping the d file closed to White's rook was better.

15.Na3 Qb6

7.40 W

16.Rxe7+! Black has critical weaknesses on the dark squares.

16…Kxe7 17.Bg5+ f6?

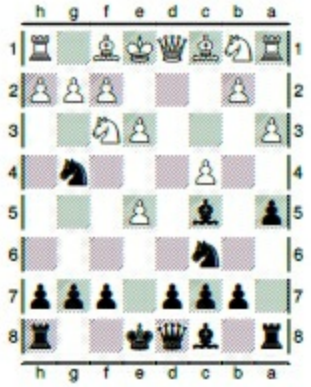
17…Ke8 was better.

18.exf6+ Kf7 19.fxg7 Rg8 20.Qf6+ Ke8 21.Qe7# 1–0

Black appeared to be a helpless bystander, unable to do anything other than to bear witness to his own demise.

Since it proves more difficult to get the rooks into play than any other piece, we sometimes have to find a means of smuggling them onto the open board. This can sometimes be achieved via a rook lift; this involves bringing the rook up the board a number of squares on the file, and then moving it horizontally along the rank.

Vaznonis.V Sakalauskas.V Kaunas 2008

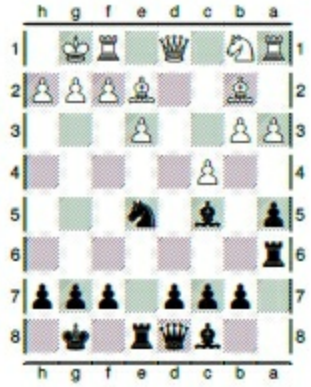


7.41 W

We join this game after Black's move six: 6…a5.

This is a multi purpose move; the advance of the a pawn provides the c5 bishop with a retreat along the g1 – a7 diagonal, and it prevents White from advancing his b pawn to b4, but it also provides the a8 rook with an avenue via which it may enter the game, this becomes apparent a few moves latter.

7.b3 0–0 8.Bb2 Re8 9.Be2 Ncxe5 10.Nxe5 Nxe5 11.0–0 Ra6

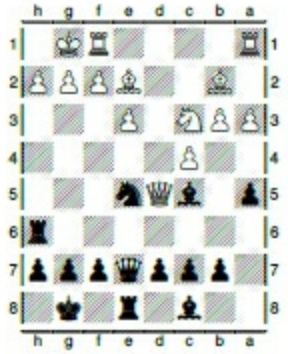


7.42 W

Having reached a6 the rook has access to a number of squares along the third rank, and has the potential to become an active participant.

The game continued:

12.Qd5 Qe7 13.Nc3 Rh6

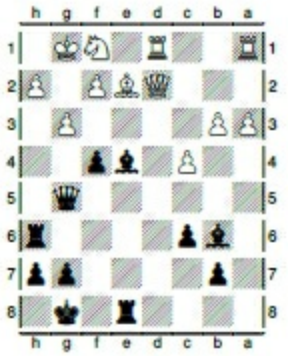


7.43 W

The rook has migrated from a8, where just a few moves earlier it was an idle prisoner, to h6, where it takes up an aggressive position - pointing directly at White's kingside.

Let's move forward to move twenty-five when the game reaches a crisis point.

14.Ne4 Ba7 15.Qxa5 d6 16.Bxe5 Bb6 17.Qd5 dxe5 18.Ng3 c6 19.Qe4 Qg5 20.Rfd1 f5 21.Qc2 f4 22.exf4 exf4 23.Nf1 Bf5 24.Qd2 Be4 25.g3



7.44 B

25…fxg3 26.Nxg3 (26.Qxg5 doesn't help White as Black mates the White king with either 26…gxf2# or 26…Bxf2#) 26…Qxg3+! 27.hxg3

Black's rook now makes a decisive entry to the game.

27…Rh1# 0–1

Hansen. L Vescovi. G Copenhagen 1995

7.45 W

We join this game with White to make his twelfth move, a recapture on e4.

12.Rxe4

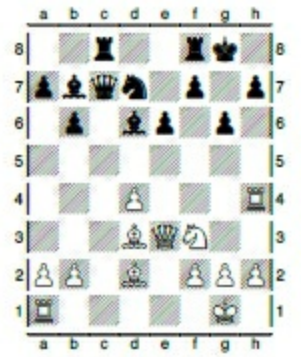
White's rook is now able to come across the board to either the g or h file, training its firepower at Black's kingside.

12...b6 13.Qe2 Bb7 14.Rh4

White's rook and bishop on d3 combine to threaten Black's pawn on h7, forcing a concession on Black's part.

14…g6

A dark square weakness appears around the Black king. However, Black should be able to play his bishop to f8 to cover this: 15.Bd2 Rac8 16.Qe3



7. 46 B

White's queen takes aim at the vulnerable h6 square. If White's queen arrives at this square it will combine with the rook on h4 to threaten a checkmating attack in the h file.

16…Rfd8

7.47 W

Black vacates the f8 square for his knight. On f8 the knight holds the h7 pawn, and in the event of White playing his queen to h6, the knight on f8 defends against White's threat of mate.

But White has another approach to Black's king.

17.Bxg6! fxg6?

17…Nf8, may have provided Black with greater resistance; the text move: 17…fxg6 ,allows White's queen to enter the attack and opens the

floodgates against Black’s king.

18.Qxe6+ Kg7 19.Rxh7+!

The rook sacrifice leaves Black’s king defenceless.

19...Kxh7 20.Ng5+ Kh8

It makes little difference which square his majesty seeks refuge in, White has a forced mate in all cases.

21.Qh3+ Kg7 22.Qh7+ Kf8 23.Qf7# 1–0

Waitzkin. J Frumkin. E New York 1987

7.48 W

We join this game after Black’s twenty-fourth move: 24…Nb2.

Black’s knight threatens the White rook on d1. It would seem sensible to move the rook, but White has an idea that involves a rook lift.

25.Re3 Nxd1?

Black should have given more thought to this position. He probably underestimated his ten-year-old opponent.

26.Qxg7+!!

What a shot.

26…Kxg7 27.Bf6+ Kg6

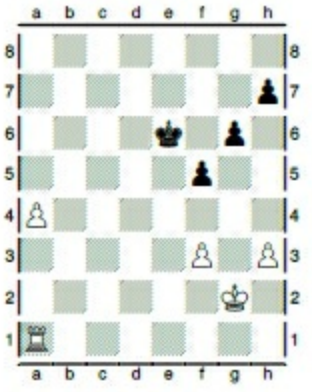
Black’s king has been forced into open ground and is relentlessly hunted to extinction.

28.Rg3+ Kh6 29.Bg7+ Kh5 30.Rg5+ Kh4 31.Nf3# 1–0

Rooks prove useful in supporting and pushing pawns, especially passed pawns. Typically such situations occur in endgames, but they are also present in some middlegames.

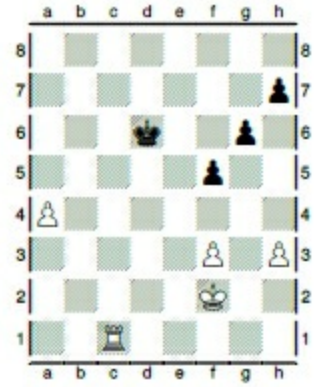
As pawns progress further up the board so they increase in value as such pawns have the potential to promote to a queen. This theme of pawn promotion lends the rook and pawn situations a great significance, and it often occurs that a rook is used to support and push a pawn, and sometimes gives itself up to enable a pawn to promote.

Below we see a number of examples in which a rook supports a passed pawn in the endgame.



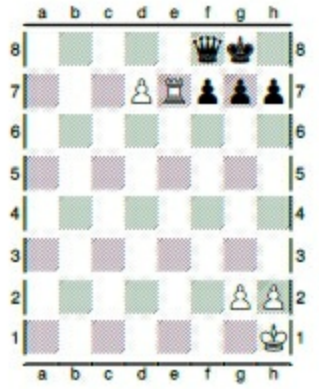
7.49 W

In the above diagram White wins easily by pushing his passed a pawn up the board. The passed pawn is supported all the way by the rook on a1, and the Black king can’t do anything to stop the passed pawn becoming a queen.



7.50 W

In this instance White's rook in the c file cuts the king off from the queenside, and again White wins easily by pushing his passed a pawn. Black's king can never set foot on the c file, as it would be in check with the White rook.



7.51 W

In this position White wins with 1.Re8.

The pawn on d7 provides a wedge on e8 defending the rook. Black dare not take the rook on e8 as after 1…Qxe8, White recaptures with 2.dxe8=Q#, but in the meantime there is no way that Black can defend his queen and prevent the advance of White's pawn to d8, giving White a new queen, Black is lost.

Of course it's easy to win when you are a whole rook up, but echoes of these positions occur in the middlegame and these potential situations can

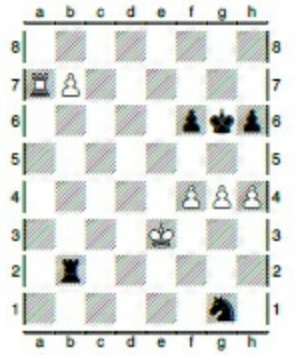
either be brought about or exploited.

Here are some examples of rooks and passed pawns combining to bringing about a win.

7.52 W

White is a pawn up and has the giant passed pawn on d7. White has a number of ways of winning here, but the most effective would be 1.Rxa5, if Black recaptures on a5: 1…Rxa5, then White pushes the d pawn, promotes to a queen and gives checkmate.

Black doesn't have to fall in with White's plans, he could play 1…Rd8, but then White has 2.Rc5 intending 3.Rc8 on his next move, winning.



7.53 W

In this position White is a piece down but he has two extra pawns to compensate for the piece, and significantly he has a menacing passed pawn on b7.

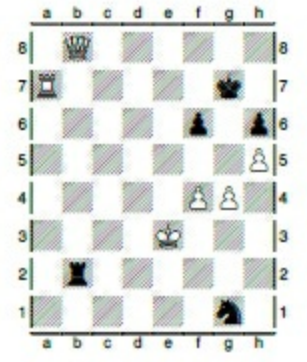
White plays: 1.h5+

This pushes Black's king back onto the same rank as White's rook on a7:

1…Kg7

Now it's a simple matter of pushing the b pawn to b8, promoting to a queen and discovering a check from the rook on a7:

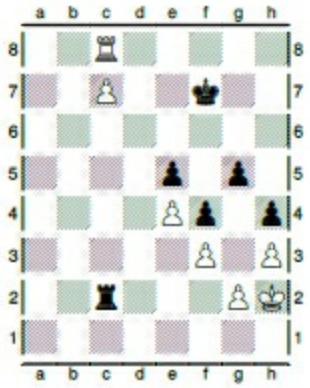
2.b8=Q+



7.54 B

Black can only delay mate by one move by giving up his rook:

2…Rb7 and 3.Rxb7#.



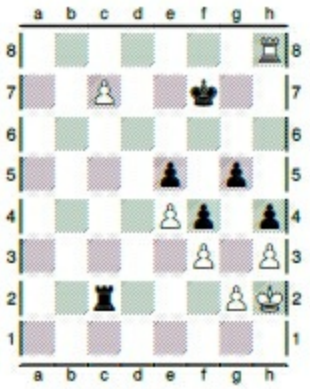
7.55 W

White's rook on c8 is the wrong side of the pawn; on c8 the rook prevents the passed pawn on c7 from advancing any further, but Black's king is poorly

placed and provides a good target for White's rook, and this helps White facilitate the advance of his c7 pawn, or brings about the win of Black's rook.

White plays:

1.Rh8



7.56 B

Black cannot avoid the loss of materiel. He must take White's advanced pawn on c7, or witness the pawn advance to become a queen, the drawback to taking on c7, however, is that Black's king will be skewered against his rook on c7.

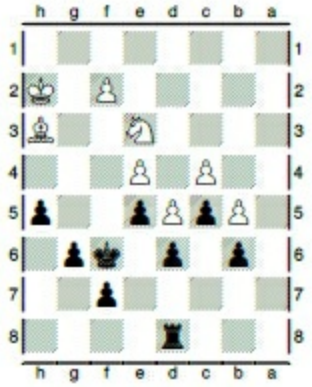
Play continued:

45…Rxc7 46.Rh7+ Ke6 47.Rxc7 Kd6 48.Rg7 1–0

Rooks often play a prominent part in endgames.

Below is a selection of endgames featuring advanced pawns and rooks.

Deva. S S.E Blackpool 2001



7.57 B

More often than not two minor pieces are better than a rook. Sometimes, however, the lone rook is more than equal to the two minor pieces.

Black has two extra pawns for his minor piece; this provides Black with a degree of compensation.

Black has recently transferred his rook to d8. The rook looks passive on this square, but Black realizes that he must play to his strengths, and that his advantage lies on the kingside where he has the extra pawns. Black has a passed pawn in the h file, so the rook on d8 is used to cement and hold the backward d6 pawn, thus enabling Black to stage an offensive on the kingside by marching his king and extra pawns forwards on the flank.

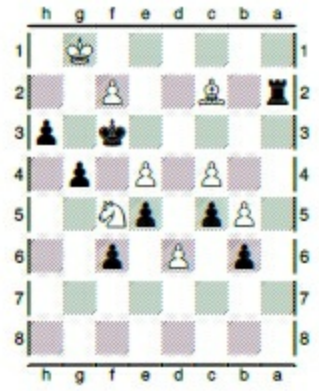
We join battle on Black's fifty-ninth move: 59…g5 60.Nf5 g4 61.Bg2 Kg5 62.Kg3 f6 63.Bf1 Ra8

The d6 pawn can now be sacrificed in order to activate the sleeping rook. You may note that White now has an advanced passed pawn on d5.

64.Nxd6

Black now pushes forward with his kingside pawns, and his king.

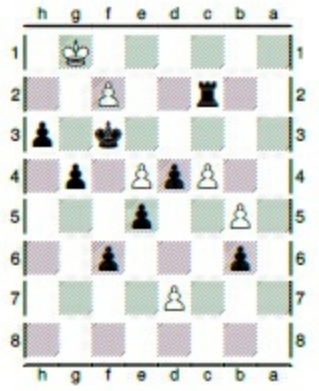
64…h4+ 65.Kg2 Kf4 66.Bd3 h3+ 67.Kg1 Kf3 68.Nf5 Ra3 69.Bc2 Ra2 70.d6!?



7.58 B

White stages a counterattack based on his advanced passed pawn in the d file, but it just falls short.

70…Rxc2 71.Nd4+ cxd4 72.d7



7.59 B

This was the point of White sacrificing both of his remaining minor pieces; the pawn on d7 cannot be prevented from advancing to become a queen. White got this far in his calculations and then stopped, assuming that the new queen would win the day for him, but it's not so clear-cut, and Black maintains a healthy initiative.

72…Rxf2

72…g3 was a playable alternative.

73.d8=Q h2+ 74.Kh1 Rf1+

74…Kg3 was also winning.

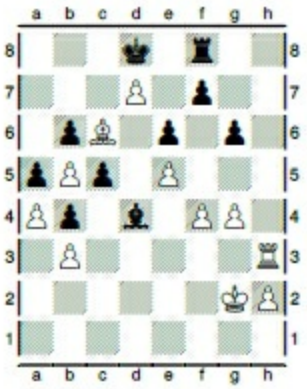
75.Kxh2 g3+ 76.Kh3 Rh1# 0–1

That was an enjoyable and interesting game.

It was also a long game, taking seventy-six moves and the best part of four hours.

To win a game of chess sometimes requires great patience, stamina and resolve. The next game provides a further example of this long-haul.

S.E Taylor. A Nottingham 2019



7.60 W

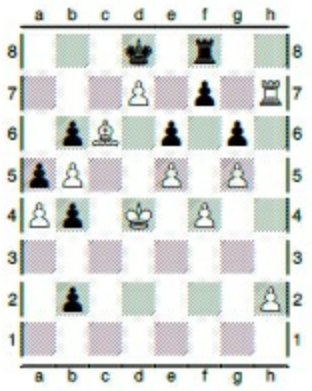
In this position White enjoys a solid plus, he is a pawn up, he has a giant of a pawn on d7, and his rook has an open line to operate on in the h file. However, the win wont happen by itself, White still has to put a plan together, the game continues with White's forty-second move:

42.Kf3 Bc3 43.g5!?

This fixes Black's pawns on light squares, and prevents the pawn break of …f6, but it fixes his own pawns on dark squares, the same colour as Black's bishop.

43…Bd4 44.Rh7 c4 45.Ke4 cxb3 46.Kxd4 b2

See diagram 7.61.



7.61 W

This was an enterprising try by Black, but White is able to arrest the progress of Black's passed pawn in the b file, and for the time being White is a piece up. Black should, however, get his materiel back.

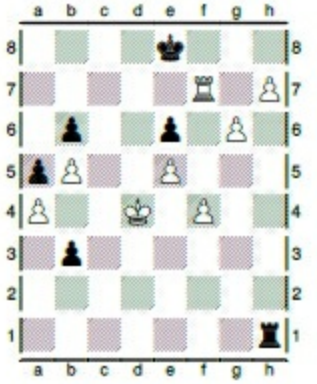
47.Be4 Kxd7

Black rids himself of the big passed pawn on his second rank.

48.Bxg6 Ke8 49.Be4 Ke7?

Black breaks one pin only to walk straight into another.

50.g6 Rc8 51.Rxf7+ Ke8 52.h4 Rc1 53.h5 b1Q 54.Bxb1 Rxb1 55.h6 Rh1 56.h7 b3



7.62 B

Black finds counter-play, but White's next move puts the issue beyond doubt:

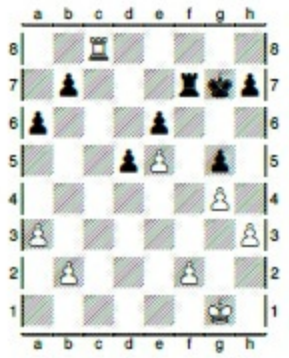
57.g7!

White hangs his rook in order to promote both his passed pawns in the g and h files.

57…Kxf7 58.g8Q+ Ke7 59.Qg7+ Kd8 60.h8Q#

7.63 B

Shinn. R S.E Monmouth 2005

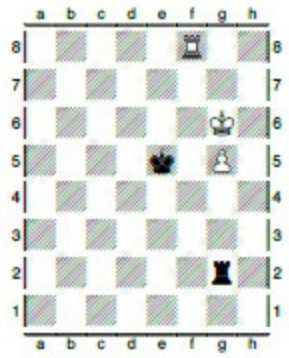


7.64 W

In this position materiel is equal, but White has the more active rook, and is able to pick off a few Black pawns.

We join the game with White to play on move thirty, and there is a considerable amount of play before we arrive at the key position, so let’s fast forward to move fifty-eight:

See diagram 7.65.



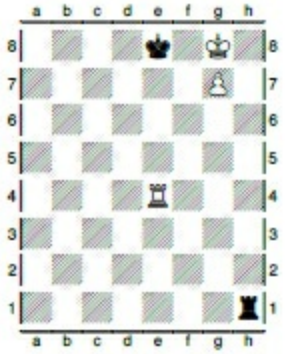
7.65 W

Black has fought back and reduced the deficit to just one pawn. If White is familiar with the Lucena Position, and knows how to build a bridge, then the win with R & pawn against R & K, should prove straight forward, if, however, he is not familiar with this technique then he may struggle and Black can look forward to a draw.

59.Rg8 Rg1

Black must keep his rook behind the passed pawn and wait for the White king to make an appearance in either the f or h files and then give check with his rook, if White can't advance his pawn then the game is a draw.

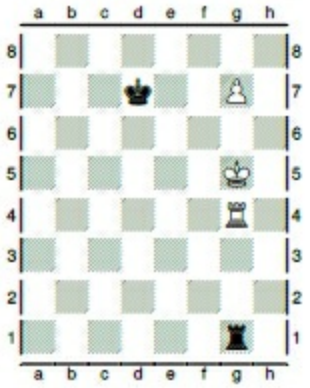
60.Kf7 Rf1+ 61.Kg7 Rg1 62.g6 Rg2 63.Rf8 Ke6 64.Kh7 Rh2+ 65.Kg8 Ke7 66.g7 Rh1 67.Rf4 Ke8 68.Re4+!



7.66 B

Black's king is forced away from the passed pawn.

68…Kd7 69.Kf7 Rf1+ 70.Kg6 Rg1+ 71.Kf6 Rf1+ 72.Kg5 Rg1+ 73.Rg4

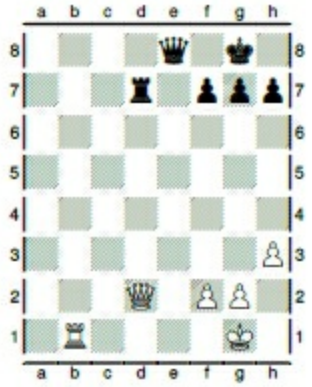


7.67 B

Brilliant technique by White, he has built the bridge that enables his passed pawn to go on to glory. Black is powerless to prevent the coronation.

73…Rxg4+ 74.Kxg4 Kd6 1–0

The rook also proves an apt executioner when one side or the other has a vulnerable back rank, see below for examples of this theme.

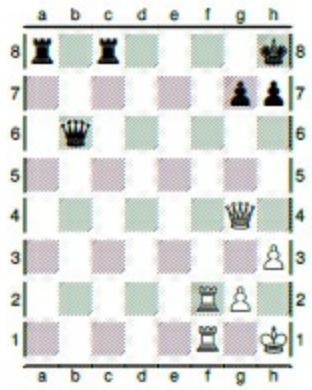


7.68 W

It is the wise player that provides an out square for his king. Black has been neglectful in this respect and, as a consequence his back rank is suspect. White exploits this weakness:

1.Qxd7 Qxd7 and 2.Rb8+.

Black can move his queen back to the first rank but it will be taken with checkmate.



7.69 W

We see a similar theme in the above example.

White plays:

1.Qxc8 + Rxc8 2.Rf8+ Rxf8 3.Rxf8#.

These two examples were fairly easy, but it's not always a case of giving a back rank mate, it is sometimes possible to exploit the possibility of a back rank mate:

7.70 W

In the above position White has a commanding lead, and he now sets about increasing his lead by utilizing a back rank threat, White plays:

1.Qc4+ Kh8 2.Qxg4

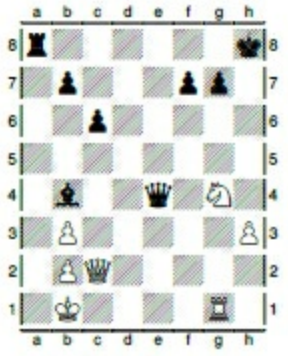
If Black recaptures with 2…fxg4 then 3.Rxf8#, and if Black doesn't recapture then he is down a piece, and may as well resign.

Finally we look at some games in which the rook proves to be the decisive factor.

7.71 W

White feints at offering Black the b5 pawn, a pawn that Black should not take.

51.Rc7 Rxb5? 52.Rg7# 1–0



7.72 B

Black gives up his rook, but in return he picks up White’s queen.

31…Ra1+ 32.Kxa1 Qxc2 0–1

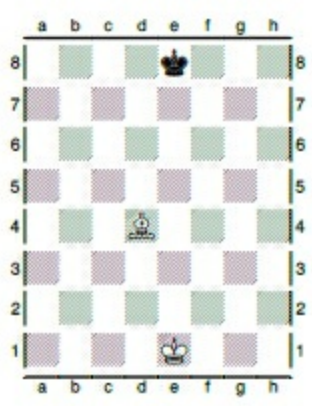
Black can force mate on the back rank: 29…Qf1+ 30.Nxf1 Rxf1# 0–1

Our consideration of the rook demonstrates that this piece, although initially difficult to get into play, is both versatile and powerful.

The Queen

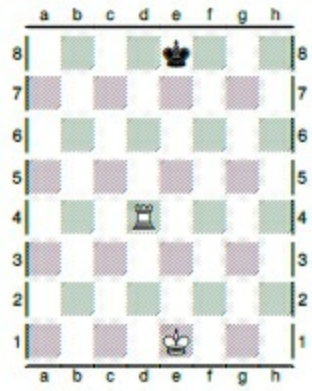
No other piece on the board is as powerful as the queen. The queen combines both attributes of the rook and bishop combined.

If we place a bishop on d4, on an open board we see that the bishop has access to thirteen squares.



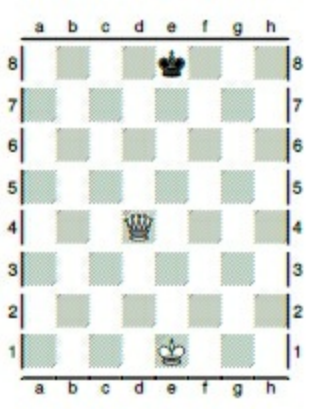
8.1

If we conduct the same exercise with the rook we see that the rook has access to fourteen squares.



8.2

If we place the queen in the centre of the board, we see that the queen not only has the fourteen squares that the rook had, but it also has the thirteen squares available to the bishop, this makes a grand total of twenty seven squares that the queen has access to, almost half of all the squares on the board, see diagram 8.3.



8.3

This level of scope is unrivaled by any other piece, clearly the queen dwarfs all other pieces.

The queen radiates power in every direction, and it is the queen's ability to hit rank file, and the diagonal that makes it such a feared character; added to this the queen has no colour prejudice, it can operate equally well on black and white colour sequences.

Because of the tremendous scope that the queen enjoys, this piece is always craving open lines, and the queen operates most effectively in open positions.

In classical set-ups the queen finds a natural habitat in the centre squares, such as e2, d2 and c2 for White, and d7, e7 and c7 for Black.

I viewed a number of decisive games as research for this section on the queen, and my findings reveal some interesting statistics:

In forty five percent of games the queens are exchanged and an endgame ensues. Of the remaining fifty five percent, the queen plays an active part in the final proceedings in seventy percent of games. In one percent of games the queen is lost to a lesser piece.

Apart from the Scandinavian and the Centre Game, the earliest queen development I encountered was on move three and the latest on move thirty-five, but on average the queen is developed on move eleven.

We are advised not to bring the queen out too early in the game as it may well become a target for our opponent's pieces.

Yet it is not un-heard of for the queen to make an appearance on b3 or b6 at a relatively early stage of the game, indeed this is typical of many variations of the Sicilian. Take the following opening for example:

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 d6 6.Bc4 Qb6

8.4 W

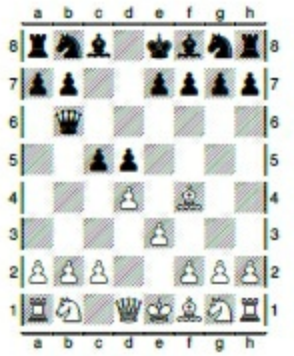
It is also common to see the respective queens deployed early on the queenside if either the c1 or c8 bishop is developed at an early stage, this leaves the b2 or b7 pawns undefended so an early appearance of the queen is justified, see below for some examples.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 Nf6 3.Nc3 Bf5 4.Qb3

8.5 B

This theme is also seen in the London: 1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 c5 3.e3 Qb6

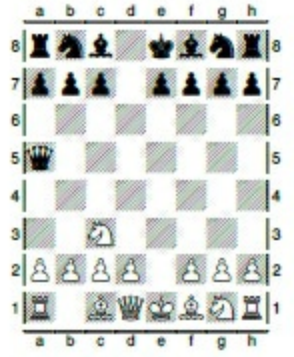
See diagram 8.6.



8.6 W

In these instances the queen is unlikely to be targeted by the opponent's minor pieces, but even on occasions when the queen suffers a hit it might still venture out early, and indeed an example of this is now a major opening – The Scandinavian:

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Qxd5 3.Nc3 Qa5



8.7 W

Is Black any worse for this early queen deployment? I think not. Indeed this opening has attracted many top players, such as Nakamura, Van Welly, and Hodgson, so it can't be bad.

White can try to copy this opening, in which case it is known as the Centre Game, but it is far less popular: 1.e4 e5 2.d4 exd4 3.Qxd4 Nc6 4.Qd3

See diagram 8.8.

8.8 B

The queen also makes an early appearance on the kingside in some lines of the French:

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e5 Ne7 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 c5 7.Qg4

8.9 B

White’s queen already plays an active role.

This theme can also be seen in the London.

1d4 d5 2.Bf4 e6 3.e3 Bd6 4.Bxd6!? Qxd6 5.Qg4

See diagram 8.10, on the next page.

8.10 B

Both queens are active, but White's queen threatens to win the g7 pawn and attack Black's rook on h8.

In none of these instances where the queen makes an early appearance does it present a long-term target for the opponent's pieces and neither does either side suffer any positional damage. Indeed in the London variation it is remarked that "5.Qg4 not only has excellent surprise value but may well be White's best try for an objective opening advantage." *

*Win with the London System, S.Johnsen and V.Kovacevic.

The queen can also make an early sortie without receiving a punishing rebuke:

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 c6 4.f4 Qa5 5.Bd2 e5 6.Nd5 Qd8 7.Nxf6+ Qxf6 8.fxe5? Qh4+ 9.g3 Qxe4+

White is in trouble.

White can try to emulate this:

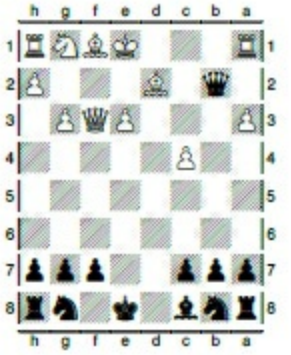
1.c3 e5 2.d3 d5 3.Nd2 f5 4.e4 fxe4? 5.Qh5+ g6 6.Qe5+

See diagram 8.11.

8.11 B

Black’s turn to be in trouble.

An early queen raid can also be seen in some lines of the Albin Counter Gambit: 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 d4 4.e3? Bb4+ 5.Nd2 dxe3 6.fxe3 Qh4+ 7.g3 Qe4 8.Qf3 Qxe5 9.a3 Bxd2+ 10.Bxd2 Qxb2

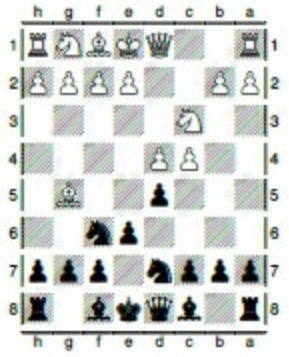


8.12 W

Black has equality and suffers no damage by bringing his queen out early.

There are some instances in which the queen is offered up as bait: 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 Nbd7

See diagram 8.13, on the next page.



8.13 W

This appears to hang the d5 pawn, but this is a well know opening trap.

5.cxd5 exd5 6.Nxd5?

White will lose a piece: 6…Nxd5

Exposing the queen on d8 to White’s bishop on g5.

7.Bxd8 Bb4+

8.14 W

White must interpose his queen.

8.Qd2 Bxd2+ 9.Kxd2 Kxd8

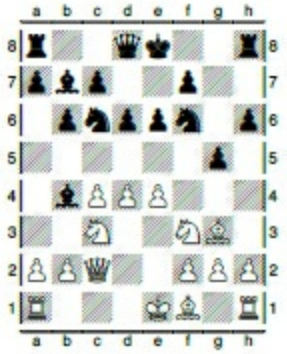
And Black wins a piece.

Here are some typical queen related themes.

The queen is theoretically capable of attacking eight different pieces at the same time, or forking eight pieces, in this respect the queen has a rival – the noble knight. However, the reach of the queen far out distances that of the knight.

8.15 B

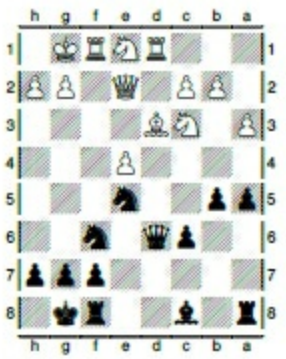
In this position Black plays 1…Qh4+, forking the king and White's bishop on a4, and Black pockets the hapless bishop on his next move.



8.16 W

White plays 1.d5, and Black blunders with 10…Ne7?? He should have played 10...Bxc3+.

After 10...Ne7??, Black's bishop on b4 is undefended and there is an open diagonal leading to Black's king. White has the simple 11.Qa4+, and the bishop on b4 is forfeit.



8.17 W

White is laboring under the false impression that 19.Bxb5 wins the b5 pawn due to the discovery against Black's queen from his rook on d1, but Black has foreseen this and parries with 19…Qc5+, forking the White's bishop on b5 and the White king, bang goes the bishop.

8.18 B

White offers up his knight as bait for Black's queen, and Black rather foolishly accepts:

1…Qxd4? White swoops for the kill:

2.Qd8+

Forking the Black king and rook, but Black faces more than the loss of the exchange.

2…Kg7 3.Qxc7+ Kh6 4.Rh3+ Bh5 5.Rxh5!+

Pulling the king further up the board and leaving it at the mercy of White’s queen.

5…Kxh5 6.Qxh7+ Kg4 7.Qh3+ Kxf4 8.Qg3# 1–0

Although the queen is a mighty force in its own right, when it combines with another piece it takes on a really menacing nature.

A queen acting in consort with a knight, for example, can be lethal, see below for some examples.

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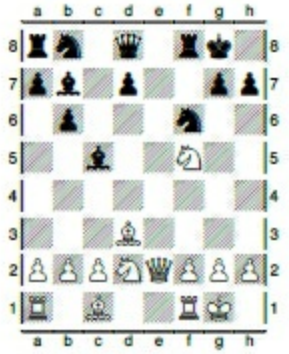


8.19 W

The game continued:

12.Ne4 Re8?

Black’s attempt to win the e4 knight with the rook pin is doomed to failure.

13.Nxf6+ gxf6

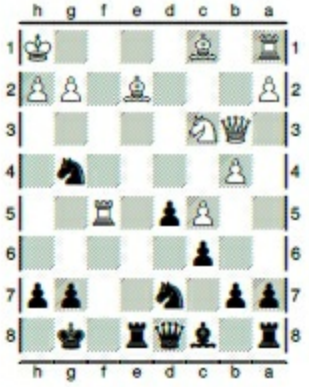
8.20W

Black has to recapture on f6 with the g pawn, taking back with his queen abandons the rook on e8 which would be left undefended, but Black opens a highway to his own king.

14.Qg4+ Kh8 15.Qg7# 1–0

Simple, but effective.

A. N. Other S.E Internet 2021



8.21 B

White has fatal weaknesses, in particular his rook in the f file has abandoned the first rank, and the rook is undefended, Black plays:

19…Qh4

Threatening 20...Qxh2, mate.

20.h3 Nde5 21.Rf4 (21.Bg5 or 21.Rf1 were probably better.)

21…Nf2+ 22.Kh2 Neg4+ 23.Bxg4 Nxg4+ 24.Kg1?

White had to give up the exchange with 24.Rxg4, but he's still on the receiving end.

24…Re1+ 25.Rf1 Rxf1+ 26.Kxf1 Qf2# 0–1

S.E A. N. Other Internet 2021

8.22 W

Black has just played 21…Nf5?? Attacking White's queen, but he has overlooked a simple mate in two:

22.Nf6+ Kh8 23.Qxh7# 1–0

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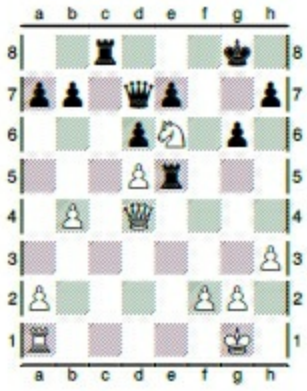

8.23 W

White plays 23.f4

Attacking Black's rook. Black has little option but to give the exchange back with 23…Rxe6, but instead he goes wrong: 23…Re2?? 24.Qg7# 1–0

These were simple examples so let's finish with a harder one.

S.E A. N. Other Internet 2020

8.24 B

White's queen prevents Black from castling. In the meantime, White is happy to leave the bishop on g5 up for grabs, since if Black takes the bishop on g5 then White recaptures with Nxg5 and threatens mate with Qf7#.

Furthermore, White can play his c3 knight to e4 targeting the d6 pawn; if White can take the d6 pawn with a knight it would be with check, and Black's king is forced to f8, after which White gives mate with his queen on

f7. White's play is based on a simple combined attack against Black's king with his knight and queen, so he can sacrifice any number of pieces whilst he sets up this straight forward attack based on the co-operation of the knight and queen.

12…a6

Black hits a second White piece, but White is not distracted. His plan is still intact and winning, so he is happy to hang a second piece.

Aside from 12…a6 we give two other options for Black below.

A, 12...Kf8 13.Bxd7 Bc8 14.Bxf6 Qxd7 15.Bxg7+ Kxg7 16.Qxd7 Bxd7 17.Rxe7+ Kh6 18.Rxd7 Rhd8 19.Rf7 Rf8 20.Rc7 Rfe8 21.Nb5 Rad8 22.Rxa7+-

B, 12...fxg5 13.Nxg5 Rf8 14.Nce4 Qc7 15.Nxd6+ Qxd6 16.Qxd6 Rf7 17.Qxd7+ Kf8 18.Qxb7 Kg8 19.Nxf7 Rf8 20.Rxe7 a6 21.Bxa6 b5 22.Bxb5

Back to the game.

13.Ne4 axb5??

Irrelevant! Missing the threat posed by the knight on e4. White has a simple forced mate in two.

14.Nxd6+ Kf8 15.Qf7# 1–0

The queen also works well with the bishop.

S.E A. N. Other Internet 2019

8.25 W

In this position White has a queen and bishop battery lined up in the b1 – h7 diagonal, and only Black's defensive knight on f6 prevents the queen from giving mate on h7. Logic would dictate then that White removes the guard, accordingly White played:

18.Ng4

Black can't afford to White's knight on g4 with his f6, but for the sake of our first example we will give Black 18…Nxg4??

And White plays 19.Qh7#.

Below there are three more examples of the queen and bishop working together.

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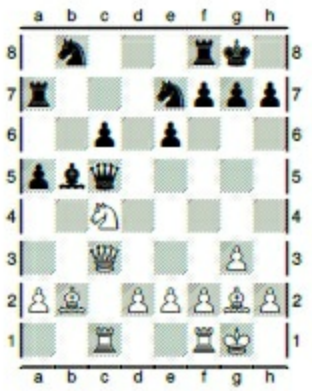

8.26 B

Again we have a simple example of the queen and bishop battery.

White threatens Qxg7#, on his next move. Black must take urgent action to defend his king, but instead he overlooks the threat.

15…Bxc4?? 16.Qxg7# 1–0

Of course it’s not always that easy, but these sort of positions in which the queen and bishop combine can be engineered.

Below are some examples of the queen and rook working together.

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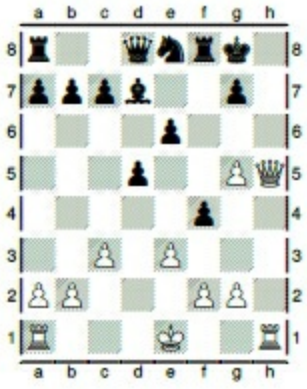

8.27 W

White’s queen and rook combine in the open h file. White has sacrificed two pieces to arrive at this position and his next move seals the win.

16.g6

Black’s king is cemented into a tomb, there is no way out for Black: 16… Rf5 17.Qh8# 1–0

S.E A. N. Other Internet 2020

8.28 W

Black’s king is exposed. White’s queen rushes in to punish the Black king for daring to lift its head above the parapet, and the queen has its partner in crime ready and waiting in the wings, all too ready to lend its weight to a deadly attack.

28.Qh6+ Kg8 29.Rh3 f5 30.Qxh7# 1–0

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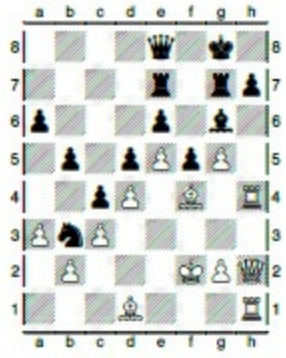
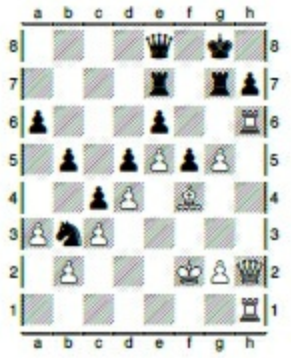


8.29 W

White has amassed considerable firepower in the h file, but can he break through?

34.Bh5 Bxh5 35.Rxh5 Qd7 36.Rh6 Qe8



8.30 W

It would seem that Black's resources might be sufficient to hold, but White brings up the reserves: 37.g6 hxg6

After 37.g6 I don't think Black can resist. Some alternatives to 37...hxg6 are given below:

37...Qd7 38.Qg3 Qe8 (38...Rxg6 39.Qxg6+! Rg7 [39...hxg6 40.Rh8+ Kg7 41.R1h7#] 40.Qxe6+ Qxe6 41.Rxe6) 39.Rxh7 Qxg6 40.Qxg6 Rxg6 41.Rxe7

Back to the game:

38.Rh8+ Kf7 39.Rxe8 Rxe8 40.Bg5 Reg8 41.Bf6 Nd2 42.Bxg7 Rxg7 43.Qh8 0–1

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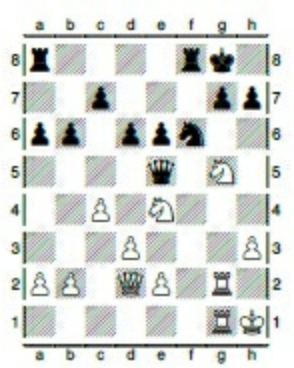

8.31 W

White has doubled rooks in the g file and his queen is waiting in the wings. White needs to open the g file to unleash his rooks.

22.Nxe6!

White sacs the knight to open the g file for his rooks.

22…Qxe6 23.Rxg7+ Kh8 24.Qh6 Rf7

Black could have played 24...Qf5 25.Nxf6 Rxf6 26.Rxh7+ Qxh7 27.Qxf6+

Back to the game:

25.Nxf6 Now there is nothing holding the h7 pawn.

25…Rxg7 26.Qxg7# 1–0

Cartledge. R S.E Blackpool 2012

8.32 B

Black’s queen on b6 is an influential piece as it views f2 and g1. Providing White can hold the g file, or exchange both sets of rooks in the open g file he is fine, but Black springs an attack against White’s rook.

20...Ne5

White’s f4 pawn is pinned against his queen, so 21.fxe5, would drop the queen to Black’s bishop on h6. White cannot maintain his rook in the g file.

21.Rxg8+ Rxg8

White has lost control of the g file and Black threatens 22…Rg2+, skewering the White king against the queen. White must prevent this move or lose, but he has no useful means of denying Black’s major pieces access to his kingside.

In the game White fell on his own sword with 22.Kf1

This gives Black mate in two:

22...Qg1+ 23.Ke2 Rg2# 0–1

The queen and rook can also combine with great effect along the rank, especially the second, or seventh, rank.

S.E A. N. Other Internet 2021

8.33 B

Black’s queen has just come under attack from White’s rook, but the position is finely balanced and Black should be able to hold the position with 28…Qe6 or 28…Qb8, both of these moves cover the weakness of Black’s first rank, but Black goes wrong.

28…Qe7?

Black has failed to note the weakness of his first rank; the bishop on f8 breaks the line of communication between Black’s rooks on the first rank, this makes Black’s first rank sensitive, and liable to invasion.

White is quick to decline the offered exchange of queens and rushes in to exploit the chink in Black’s Armour.

29.Rc8+ Rxc8 30.Qxc8+ Ka7 31.Rd7

See diagram 8.34.

8.34 B

White’s queen and rook team up to attack the b7 point, and Black’s, defences are breeched.

31...Qxe4 32.fxe4 Kb6 33.Rxb7+ Ka5 34.Qc2 Bd6 35.b4+ Bxb4 36.axb4#

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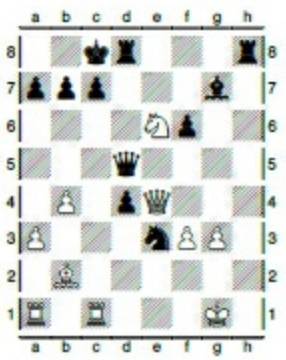

8.35 B

At first glance this looks good for White as he forks the rook on d8 and the undefended bishop on g7, but Black should not be too concerned, and 26…c6, is fine and keeps the initiative in the balance. Black need not fear 27.Nxg7, as 27…Qg5, is a strong response, and 27.Nxd8, can be meet by 27…Qh5, which is also very good for Black, but instead Black has a rush of blood to the head and goes in for an ‘attack’.

26…Qh5??

Black thinks that he is now threatening mate in two with 27…Qh1+ 28.Kf2 and 28…Rh2#; but he has overlooked that White too has threats:

27.Rxc7+

And Black resigns, mate on b7 with 28.Qxb7#, cannot be stopped.

The queen likes nothing better than to see an exposed king; if the king can be enticed, or forced, out to open ground then carnage and mayhem ensue, but again, the queen cannot do the deed on its own.

Below we give a number of examples of the queen and other pieces combining to attack an exposed king.

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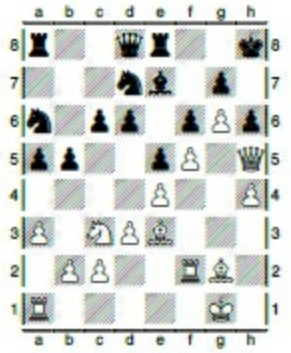

8.36W

There are some instances when the king is exposed in its own home. In this position the Black king has no defenders to lend it comfort, all that White needs to do is to open the door. 19.Bxh6 gxh6 20.Qxh6+ Kg8 21.Qh7+ Kf8 22.Qh8#.

We conclude this section with a few examples of a queen sacrifice.

You can wait a long time before being able to play a true queen sacrifice. However, no piece is so mighty that it cannot be sacrificed, and no sacrifice is quite like that of laying down the life of the queen.

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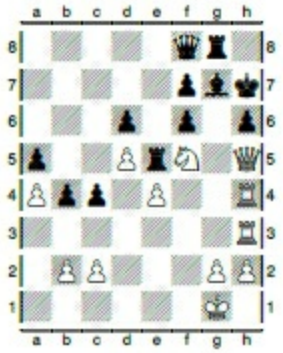
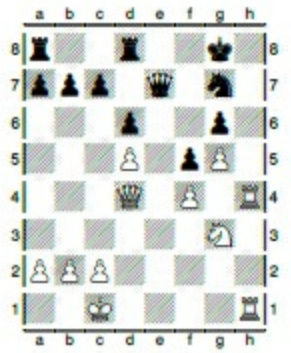


8.37 W

White has massed all his major pieces in the h file, and outnumbers the defenders of h6, and his knight on f5 controls the g7 square. White plays: 29.Qxh6+ Bxh6 30.Rxh6+ Qxh6 31.Rxh6#.



8.38W

White has a rook check on h8 that forces the Black king to f7, and White's pawn on g5 holds the f6 square. White plays: 1.Rh8+ Kf7 2.Qxg7+ Kxg7 3.Rh1h7#.

We have seen that the queen can be a very powerful piece which stands head and shoulders above all others.

PART TWO: THINKING AND TACTICS, A FOUNDATION COURSE

How to form a plan

In chess, as in life, nothing worthwhile takes place in the absence of a plan.

There are three prime ingredients for any successful plan in chess:

1, An idea, or ideas.

2, We then test our idea/s for soundness.

3, We select a move and put it into practice.

The first two parts of this formula need looking at in more detail.

But first of all let's see how a plan might come into being in the opening.

1.e4 e5 2.f4

This is the King's Gambit.

1.1 B

White's idea, his plan, is to tempt Black into giving up the centre ground by offering him the pawn on f4, and if Black is obliging and takes the pawn – 2…exf4, then white plays 3.d4.

See diagram 1.2.

1.2 B

White's idea has come into being. Black has grabbed the pawn on f4, and surrendered the centre, thus allowing White to seize the centre ground.

This is the essence of a chess plan. It is straightforward simple stuff. White looked no more than two or three moves ahead.

Let's consider another opening – The Benoni.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.Nc3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6

1.3 W

Black sets out to create an imbalance in the position. Black has achieved this by creating a majority of three pawns to two on the queenside. He knowingly allows White a majority of two to one in the centre. Black will continue with g7 – g6 and develop his bishop to g7. Black hopes that on g7, the bishop will help his play on the queenside. Black will castle short into a well-defended redoubt.

But these are not our independent ideas, this is opening theory. When our

opening theory runs out, then we are on our own, and this is when we must have a technique for creating our own plans.

So we come back to our first point – we must have an idea or a set of ideas. These ideas must be assessed for relevance and accuracy.

When obtaining the first seed of an idea we must have a good understanding of the position that faces us on the chessboard. No successful plan can take place in the absence of understanding. Minus understanding we are condemned to forever walk in darkness. The key to comprehending a chess position lies in conducting an assessment and evaluation.

This assessment and evaluation is a fundamental building block in the formation of a plan. In the process of this exercise we make observations that become the bricks and mortar of our plans.

Having undertaken this assessment and evaluation, and thus achieved a level of understanding, we will be familiar with the requirements of the position, and this in-turn, will generate any number of ideas. We would then be ready for the second phase – testing our ideas.

To achieve an in depth assessment and evaluation we need to follow a criteria. Listed below are the points that we should consider when looking at a position.

1 The materiel balance.

2 King safety.

3 Pawn structure.

4 Piece placement.

5 Dynamic and static elements.

6 Imbalances.

7 Threats and potential attacks.

8 The need to defend.

This list may seem a bit daunting, and I would certainly not recommend that you learn it by heart and then run through it before making any and every move. The points listed above are details that should be taken in at a glance, but acquiring the ability to assess a given position at a glance does not come overnight, such a skill is built over time. However, the need to know what is going on in a position is vital, so we can benefit by practicing this technique, and the more positions we view, the better we become, and our ability to recognise the key factors in a position is not only enhanced, but the rate at which we absorb this information becomes accelerated.

Let's undertake an assessment and evaluation exercise.

In the following position it is White to move.

S.E Watson. R Coventry 2019

1.4 W

1, The materiel balance.

In this position there is a materiel balance. White has a queen, two rooks, three minor pieces and six pawns. This materiel is matched by Black, so we are able to conclude that neither side has a materiel plus or minus, as far as materiel is concerned the position is equal.

2, King safety.

There is a fair amount of space around the White king. However, White appears to have all avenues of approach to his king covered. Nevertheless, compared to Black's king The White king looks exposed. Black's king is by far the safer of the two monarchs.

3, Pawn structure.

White has three islands of two pawns, with two on the queenside, two in the centre and two on the kingside. Black also has three pawn islands, with two pawns on the queenside, one in the centre and three on the kingside. White's pawn on b2 is under attack from Black's bishop on g7, but this is easily defended. White has a majority of pawns in the centre – two to one. White's pawn on e4 is backward on a half open file. However, the e4 pawn is defended by the White bishop on g2, and as yet it is not attacked, but the pawn's backward nature creates a hole on e5. It would appear that White has advanced his g pawn in order to hold back the natural looking advance by Black of his f pawn to f5. On the whole I feel that White's pawn structure is healthy. Black's pawn structure also appears to be healthy, he has an isolated pawn on d6 which is defended and does not appear to be in any danger.

4, Piece placement.

White's rook on d1 needs to come to the c file, this gives him an attack against the Black queen and gains tempo. His other rook on f1 stands well on the half open file. White's bishop on e3 is well placed, and covers the diagonal approach to its king; the bishop also applies a press against Black's pawn on b6. White's bishop on g2 is purely a defensive piece at this stage. White's knight on f4 looks misplaced at the moment, but it could be re-routed to an excellent post on d4 via e2. White's queen is flexibly posted on e1. From this vantage point the queen has easy access to both the kingside, via g3 or h4, and the queenside via b4.

Black's rook on d8 is misplaced. This rook needs to come to the c file. Black's rook on f8 could easily make an appearance in the e file; from this vantage point it puts pressure on White's backward pawn on e4. Black's bishop on b7 is hitting a brick wall and needs to be redeployed to a6; on this square it is hitting White's rook on f1. Black's bishop on g7 is a very strong

piece; this bishop has an influence in the centre and threatens White's pawn on b2, it is probably the best piece on the board. Black's knight on d7 is well placed, on its present square the knight has access to e5, an excellent outpost, the knight can also come to c5. Black's queen on c7 is vulnerable to a hit from White's rook coming to the c file, furthermore the queen is defending the pawn on d6 and may be left defending the pawn on b6 as well. Black's queen is not well placed, and is in danger of becoming overworked.

5, Dynamic and static elements.

I feel that White has more going for him. Bringing the rook to the open c file with a hit on the Black queen is good, it buys time and the White queen can make an appearance on b4, which meets the threat against his b2 pawn and puts pressure on Black's isolated pawn on d6. Having played this White might also consider bringing the knight to d4, from this jumping off point the knight might come to c6. White might also consider advancing on the kingside with g5, h4 and introducing the bishop on g2 to a new diagonal on h3. All of these ideas have to be tested by a careful consideration of factors. Advancing the kingside pawns, for example, may be weakening and might encourage Black to counterattack against the advanced pawns with a possible h6 or f6.

Black is not without plus points in this position. His bishop on g7 is a mighty piece and has a far-reaching influence. His knight on d7 is well placed to take up residence on the e5 square. He can bring his f rook to the e file, and his d rook to the c file. Black should try to breath life into his b7 bishop possibly with a5 and bishop a6.

A static point in White's camp is the backward pawn on e4. This may become a problem for him in the future. Black has a static pawn on d6. This pawn is not on an open file, but it might be targeted on the diagonals, and could be a problem for Black.

6, Imbalances.

The prime imbalance in this position is White's central pawn majority of two to one. Given that both sides have an equal number of pawns then White's majority in the centre would see Black having a majority in the

kingside of three to two. These majorities and minorities are more likely to play a part in the endgame; certainly White cannot advance in the centre without losing his e pawn, and there is nothing to be gained from sacrificing the pawn. Likewise, it is too early for Black to be thinking of advancing his kingside majority; further imbalances are seen in White's possession of the half open f file and Black's half open e file.

7, Threats and potential attacks, or the need to defend.

The only clear threat in this position is to White's pawn on b2, but White can meet this comfortably with Rc1, and Qb4. White has the potential to generate pressure against Black's d6 pawn with the sequence of Rc1, Qb4, Ne2, Nd4, Nc6, and if Black captures on c6 with the bishop then White has Rxc6, with a double attack against the pawn on d6. However, this takes time and Black should be able to defend the d6 pawn with Rfe8, and Bf8, although the last move is something of a concession.

Black may be able to drum up an attack against White's backward e pawn with Rfe8, and Nf6, but White could meet this with Ne2 - Nc3.

On the whole I would consider this position to be finely balanced. Both parties have their strengths and weaknesses. The one thing that I don't like for Black is that after Rc1, the Black queen will have to flee to b8. On this square the Black queen is out of play, and his bishop on b7 is somewhat passive, because of this I would say that White has a marginal plus in this position.

We have now conducted a general review of the position and considered the pros and cons for each side. We have successfully undertaken an evaluation and assessment of the position and viewed possible continuations for each side. Furthermore, from this exercise White has generated a number of ideas, probably the most promising of which is playing the rook to the c file.

Carrying out these evaluation and assessment exercises is time well spent. This activity is good training, and helps us to obtain that all-important clarity and understanding of the various positions that we will encounter. These exercises are not, however, an over-night fix. I would recommend that you

try to do one of these exercises every day, or perhaps one every other day.

We now have a mechanism in place - an assessment and evaluation, that allows us to obtain a good understanding of the position. We have seen in the previous example how this assessment and evaluation generates ideas. In this section we are going to repeat this exercise, but we are also going to incorporate a method of thinking, and view how in turn we can create a solid means of achieving our choice of next move.

It’s not necessary to list all the criteria in our heads in the shape of a long list, these aspects will come to you without even thinking about it, all it takes is time.

Do you remember how much time energy and effort you put into learning how to walk? This process is very similar, baby steps at first then before you know it you are happily walking, and then running all over the place without giving it a second thought.

S.E A. N. Other Internet 2020

1.5 W

We join this game after seven moves, and it is White to play.

Obviously we need to make a move, but we want to obtain that all-important understanding of the position. Therefore, we have to commence with the first part of our formula and carry out an assessment and evaluation.

In chess there is no substitute for clear thinking, but we need to give voice

to our thoughts.

So what would we say to ourselves about the above position? Perhaps more important is the way that we say things to ourselves. When getting a feel for the position you might make mental statements to yourself, for example - The above position is straightforward. There is no tension. There are no obvious threats.

Continuing this strain of thought you might tell yourself that this position contains a number of note worthy features, and these features point towards a future continuation.

What are the salient features of this position?

Going forward with our mental dialogue with ourselves: if we look at the pawn structure we can make a note to ourselves that both sides have a pawn in the centre on the fourth rank. White has a pawn on d4, and Black has a pawn on d5. Both sides are supporting their central pawn with another pawn, there is a pawn chain, therefore, we can conclude that both sides have a secure grip on the centre.

A further view of the pawn structure reveals that Black has a majority of two pawns to one in the centre, and that White has a majority of three to two on the queenside. We might also observe that both central pawns are static. White's pawn on d4 cannot advance and neither can Black's pawn on d5.

We can note that White has a solid grip on e5, as he influences this square twice, once with the pawn on d4 and once with the knight on f3, it is possible, therefore, for White to occupy the e5 square with his knight. Black influences the e4 square in White's camp, but White has this square under his control as he has two units that impact this square – the bishop on d3 and the knight on d2, Black cannot occupy e4 with his knight without losing a pawn. We could, therefore, further conclude that White has marginally better control over the centre than Black.

We should note that the game is in the opening phase, and that both sides have a need to complete their development. We can observe that White's bishop on d3 is very well placed, whereas Black's dark-squared bishop is not

so well placed and would be better employed on the central d6 square. We should remark to ourselves that both sides have a problem child, their respective queen's bishops. White's bishop on c1 is blocked by its own knight and has no scope at all. Black's bishop on c8 can come to d7, but due to the pawns on e6 and d5, Black's bishop has very limited scope. Black could bring his bishop to b7 if he were to move the b pawn to b6, but the bishop would still be hemmed in by its own pawns. We can also add that there is a materiel balance, and both kings are secure, but in need of castling. Finally, we should have picked up that both sides have a half open file. White has the half open e file and Black has the half open c file.

There is a fair amount to ponder in this outwardly looking innocent position. Yet my thoughts were presented in a random fashion. There was no logical process that dictated what item came first, or why I viewed the position in the order that I did. I don't think the order in which we view things is so important. The important thing is that we have noted all the relevant factors of this position as it stands, and we have a good understanding of it.

We now have to consider what ideas our observations have given rise to. These ideas become our candidate moves. When sitting at the board we have to keep track of these moves and keep a mental log of them in our head.

We know that this is still the opening phase of the game, therefore, we should immediately think of castling. This becomes our first candidate move. One possible alternative to castling is to play the queen to e2 and castle on the next move. This also becomes a candidate move. Furthermore, our observations have revealed that White has a half open e file and a good grip on the e5 square. These two points gives us a short-term plan for going forward.

But immediately we have to select our next move. We viewed two candidate moves – 11.0-0, and 11.Qe2. I would be saying to myself at this stage of the game that I should first castle as this complies with opening principals and then bring the rook to the half open e file, develop the queen to e2, supporting my grip on e5, and then bring the knight to e5. This eliminates my second candidate move of 11.Qe2. I consider 11.0-0, to be more accurate

than 11.Qe2.

Having looked this far we can think a little bit further down the line, and consider supporting the knight on e5 with perhaps f2 – f4, or Nd2 f3, or we might bring the queen to the h file prior to supporting the knight on e5 with Qf3 – h3, and only then support the e5 knight with either f4 or Nd2 – f3, or perhaps we won't need to support the e5 knight at all. We now have a number of ideas for going forward, but these are embryonic and need firming-up.

We should also look at Black's position, and note any plans for our opponent.

Immediately I would note that Black's position is solid. Black's pieces are reasonably placed, but passive. Black is in need of counter-play.

Bearing in mind that White can drum up rapid play on the kingside, I would be very reluctant to castle on the kingside if I were Black. Black's king is safe enough in the centre for the time being; if White castles then I would say that Black's best continuation is to play Rb8, looking for a minority attack on the queenside with an advance of the b pawn. Alternatively, Black could play Qc7, followed by b7-b6 and Bb7, but Black has no real attacking play unless he goes in for queenside activity.

We have now provided ourselves with plausible lines of play for our opponent.

To test the ideas that our observations have given rise to we must look forward in our mind's eye and visualize the various continuations. This involves a little calculation and making a judgment call.

It is not difficult to visualize the position with both kings castled, a White rook on e1, the queen on e2 and a knight on e5. Then we have to ask ourselves how we feel about this position. Do we like it? Do we feel that we have an advantage? Debating these questions helps to bring our judgment skills into play.

I would say that after castling, playing the rook and the queen to the e file

and the knight to e5 that White is better. I like the position. I think that White has a very good platform and the better position. However, we must always check our plan and be prepared to change it if necessary.

More on tactics, finding & calculatiing forcing moves

There is nothing in chess more satisfying than the swashbuckling sacrifice that tears asunder the seemingly invincible citadel of our opponent's defence.

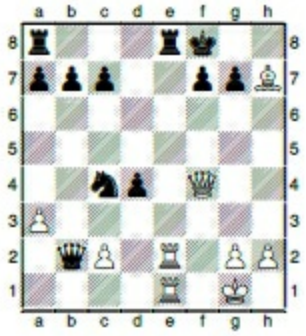
Yet we must tread with care. When sacrificing materiel we must get a good return for our investment. Accurate calculation is essential; it's no good sacrificing our queen just to discover two moves later that we overlooked a defensive resource for our opponent.

When an attack reaches a high-water mark a breakthrough must be achieved in the immediate or very short-term future, failing this the attack ebbs, and victory peters out to a draw, or worse still defeat.

The conditions in which a sacrifice works are fleeting. We might have just one move, and if we overlook it, then it's gone forever. The opportunity to strike must be seized immediately.

Knowing when to strike, and where, requires insight. The key to finding these gems often lies in simply looking for them, and sometimes, it's just gut instinct that drives us to these sacrifices. However, if we don't look, we don't see, therefore, we should consider every check, and every capture. To borrow a phrase from Fred Reinfeld – Consider the move that smites.

If we look at every check and every capture then we may discover a thing of beauty, and we might exposes the impossible as a fraud, and replace it with the incredible.



2.1 W

Consider the move that smites.

The move that smites is immediate. The move that smites is powerful. The move that smites is violent. The one move that meets all of these criteria is check.

In diagram 3.1, Black's king has no flight squares. The bishop on h7 cuts off the g8 square and the rooks prevent the king coming to e7. White has two rooks deployed in the e file, but it only takes one to prevent his majesty bolting for the hills, that means we have a spare rook, and the bishop can cover other potential flight squares, such as g6.

STRIKE! NOW!

If we miss this chance it's gone forever.

Look at the checks, and heed the clues.

White has two checks.

1.Rxe8+, can quickly be dismissed. This only reduces materiel for no gain.

The other check is 1.Qxf7+.

Black's response is forced: 1…Kxf7.

Now visualize the position in your mind's eye.

How many flight squares does the Black king have?

What follow up is there to this check?

On f7 the king has no flight squares. White's bishop cuts off g8 and g6. The doubled rooks cut off any attempt to flee to the e file, and, as stated, we have a rook to spare.

If either of these rooks takes a small step to the right, onto the f file, then we have another check. Now where can the king go?

White plays 2.Rf1 checkmate.

A point worth bearing in mind is that the first move – the move that strikes, is not necessarily the blow that kills, it's the follow up move/s that kill. The first blow lays bare the vulnerable flesh, but it is the follow up move/s that thrusts the dagger into the heart.

2.2 W

In the above position White has a small tactical window.

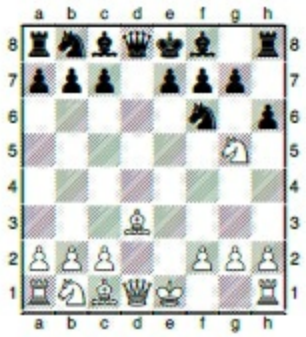
Does he have any checks?

The necessary conditions are in place for a back rank mate. There are four checks available to White here, but only one works: White plays 1.Qxc8+. The other checks can be dismissed, but I hope you looked at them. After 1.Qxc8+, our opponent's hand is forced he must reply 1…Rxc8. Then White plays the follow up moves. Next in the sequence: 2.Rf8+, again a forcing move. Our opponent has no choice in move, he must play 2…Rxf8,

and then the third and final move 3.Rxf8 checkmate.

It's simple and logical, but had White played something like 1.d4, then the moment is lost as Black can step out of the back rank mate with 1…h6.

The move that smites is not always a check, but it is usually forcing in nature.



2.3 W

In the above position we are still very much in the opening, only five moves have been played.

White's knight on g5 is under attack. Should it retreat?

There are a number of signs here. The d file is open. The queens could end up facing each other. White has a knight fork on f7 against Black's queen on d8 and his rook on h8, this is a forcing move.

View it in your mind's eye.

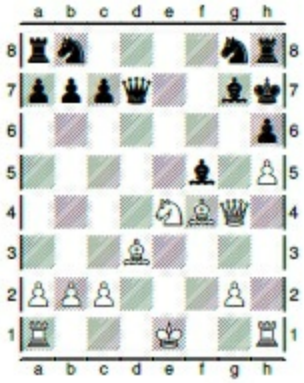
1.Nxf7

White forks Black's queen and rook, if Black wants to avoid the loss of a major piece he must take the knight: 1…Kxf7, but this brings the Black king onto a light square, and White has a light-squared bishop that is all too ready and willing to strike.

White plays 1.Nxf7 Kxf7 2.Bg6+ Kxg6 3.Qxd8.

White wins the queen and a pawn for two minor pieces, and Black's king is out on a limb, advantage White. Like most things that appear difficult, it's

easy once you know how.



2.4 W

In the above example, Black's king is boxed in, it has no flight squares.

Where is the forcing move? There are four checks here.

A, 1.Qxg7+.

This doesn't look too promising. After 1…Qxg7, White has no follow up.

B, 1.Qxf5+ Qxf5.

We now have a situation in which the Black queen and king are on the same diagonal and we can open the diagonal for our light-squared bishop with 2.Ng3, and force 2…Qxd3, so what does that give us? We have exchanged a queen and bishop. We have only succeeded in reducing our resources, this is not progress.

C, 1.Ng5+

What happens after 1…hxg5? 2.Qxg5. We have to move the queen as Black's bishop attacks it, nothing comes from this.

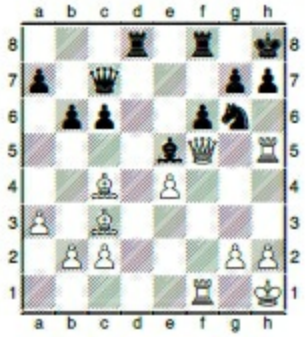
Last one: 1.Qg6+.

1…Bxg6, is forced. Now what? Any more forcing moves? 2.Ng5+, and 2…hxg5, is forced, and now we have an open diagonal for our bishop on d3,

and we are able to force open the h file with 3.hxg6+, not only is this a check, but it's a double check. The king must move to get out of a double check, and that is one thing that the king can't do. Interposing with 3…Bh6 still leaves the king in check from the g6 pawn. The king is in a double check and can't move, it's checkmate!

By a process of elimination and careful calculation we got there. Told you it was easy.

White plays 1.Qg6+ Bxg6, forced, 2.Ng5+ hxg5, forced, 3.hxg6 checkmate.



2.5 W

In the example above White's bishop on c4 is the star of the show. The bishop cuts off the vital g8 square. Black's king has no flight squares.

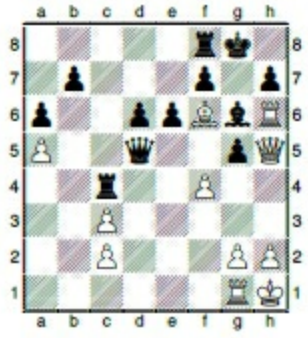
Does White have any forcing moves? Yes, he does. White has 1.Rxh7+, Black must take the rook, then White has the simple 2.Qh5 checkmate.

White plays 1.Rxh7+ Kxh7 2.Qh5 #.

Had White taken the time to double his rook and queen in the h file with 1.Qh3, then Black could have defended with 1…h6, and 2.Rxh6+ gxh6 3.Qh6+ fails to 3…Qh7.

You may also have noticed that White could have won materiel with 1.Qxg6, but this let's Black off the hook.

The motto of the story is strike when the iron is hot. You only have a small window of opportunity – seize the moment.



2.6 W

In diagram 3.6, White's queen is attacked, but if White retreats he loses momentum.

The dark squares around Black's king are very weak, not only g7 but also h8.

Does White have any forcing moves?

He does have two checks.

A, 1.Rxg6+

This is all well and good if 1…hxg6, when White has 2.Qh8#, but Black is not going to be so obliging. Black will respond with 1…fxg6, then what? 2.Qh6, threatening mate on g7 is easily met by 2…Rf7. White has given up the exchange for nothing.

B, 1.Qxg6

This is even worse than 1.Rxg6, it's horrible.

Ok, we can dismiss the checks. Is there anything else?

As stated before – the dark squares around Black's king are very weak, so what about 1.Rxh7. This threatens mate with 2.Rh8#. Black doesn't have the time to take the queen on h5. He must take the rook with 1…Bxh7, and now we have 2.Qh6 threatening an unstoppable mate on g7.

White plays: 30.Rxh7 Bxh7 31.Qh6.

Black has no defence 1–0

2.7 W

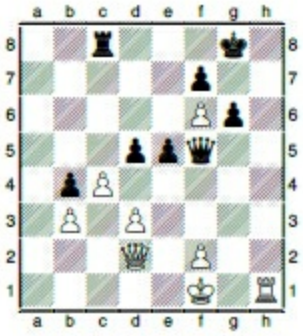
In diagram 3.7, White's attack has reached a critical stage. His queen is attacked and he is the exchange down.

Running with the queen sounds the death knell for White; to prove his attack is justified White needs to do something decisive.

White doesn't have any checks, but he does have a couple of big trumps. His bishop on e5 is on the same diagonal as the Black king, and he has an advanced pawn on f6, and he has a forcing move: 1.Qxg6. Black must recapture or remain a piece down so 1…fxg6, this unblocks the road for the pawn on f6, which can now boldly march forward with 2.f7+, not only announcing it's own advancement in life with a soon to be promotion, but it opens the door for the bishop on e5 which now gives check to the Black king.

White had to make sure here that Black's counter queen sac with 2… Qxe5, was of no consequence, once assured of this White continues.

1.Qxg6 fxg6 2.f7+ Qxe5 f8=Q checkmate.



2.8 W

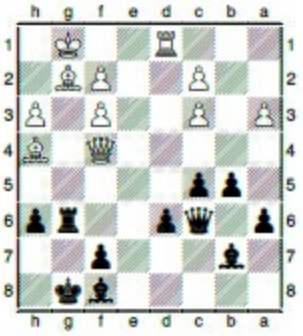
In diagram 3.8, Black has serious dark square weakness around his king.

The pawn on f6 provides a deadly wedge with a potential for checkmate with Qg7, but White needs to exploit this opportunity quickly otherwise Black will simply take the pawn on f6 and Black will stand better.

White needs to bring his queen to h6 post haste, is there a means of forcing this?

This one should be easy for you.

1.Rh8+ Kxh8, forced, 2.Qh6+ Kg8, forced, 3.Qg7 mate.



2.9 B

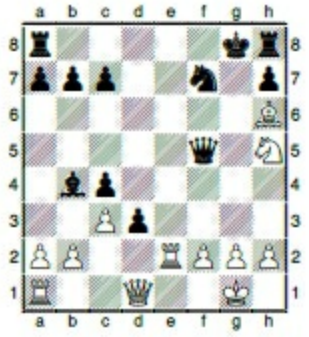
In the above position, Black only has one check – 1…Rxg2+.

What happens next? Is there a worthwhile follow up?

White plays 2.Kxg2, and then what? 2…Qxf3+ 3.Qxf3 Bxf3 4.Kxf3, this is no good, but at least we looked at it.

However, the bishop on g2 is pinned against the king, and paralysed, therefore the pawn on f3, is attacked twice, by the queen and bishop battery, and only defended once – by the White queen. Black can take the pawn on f3, with his queen, and on f3, the queen is threatening mate on g2 and it's hitting the undefended rook on d1. White must take the queen off, 2.Qxf3,Black recaptures on f3, with his bishop and now threatens the bishop on g2, and the rook on d1. White can't guard both the bishop and rook at the same time, he must lose a piece.

Black plays:1…Qxf3 2.Qxf3 Bxf3 3.Rd3 and 3…Bxg2 wins a piece.



2.10 W

Black's king is dangerously exposed, and has no flight squares.

But all is not well in White's camp; three of White's pieces are hanging.

The bishop on h6 is attacked by Black's knight. White's knight is hit by Black's queen and his rook on e2 is attacked by the pawn on d3.

If White is to take advantage of the exposed Black king, then it must be NOW, on the move.

Bear in mind that the Black king has no flight squares. It only takes one check to bury the Black monarch.

What forcing moves does White have?

He has two checks: 1.Re8+, and 1.Nf6+.

Let’s play 1.Re8+.

Remember – the first blow serves only to expose the vulnerable flesh. It is the follow up move/s that pushes the dagger home.

The rook check is irrelevant. The point is that moving the rook opens a line for the White queen on d1, do you remember the significance of open lines?

Open lines are the avenues of attack.

After 1…Rxe8, forced, White has 2. Qg4+.

Black is forced to respond; it’s a check. Everything stops for check.

Black has three means of meeting the check, but neither one saves him.

Black can respond with either 2…Qxg4, in which case White plays 3.Nf6#. Alternatively Black has 2…Qg6, and 3.Nf6, checkmate. Black’s queen can’t take the knight because it’s pinned against the king, or Black can play 2…Ng5, but then he gives up his queen, and the game is lost.

PART THREE: THE OPENING, HOW TO OBTAIN AN ADVANTAGE, A FOUNDATION COURSE

In order to mount an attack it is essential to bring our pieces off the first rank, however, it is very important that we do this in a constructive fashion.

In chess we are fortunate to have the guidance of opening principles. Below we see a list, in no particular order, of do and don't rules.

Do: Control/occupy the centre with pawns.

Don't: make too many pawn moves in the opening.

Do: Develop your pieces to their best squares.

Don't: move the same piece twice or more in the opening without very good reason.

Don't: bring the queen out too early.

Do: Make the king safe by castling.

Regardless of the particular opening variation you play, and regardless of what colour you have, the aims of every opening are the same.

Our objectives in the opening phase are:

A, to gain an element of control in the centre of the board with a pawn, or pawns.

B, to deploy our minor pieces to their most effective squares.

C, to put the king in a place of safety.

D, to construct a working platform for the coming middlegame.

These aims should be achieved in the most time effective manner; whilst achieving our own goals, we must keep a weather eye on what our opponent is doing, and be ever watchful for any mistakes that we can exploit, whilst avoiding making any mistakes ourselves.

Most openings are concluded in the first ten to fifteen moves. It is said that the opening phase is completed when the rooks are connected on the first rank, although some games are won without this criteria being met.

A game of chess is first and foremost a competitive struggle. In the opening we are involved in a race. It is imperative that we are able to match our opponent in the number of pieces developed, and, therefore, to maintain a balance in force. It's vitally important that we don't fall behind in this race, therefore, we must avoid wasting time.

Every move is called a tempo, or tempi; if we waste tempo then our opponent will be able to mobilize his army before we do. In that case our opponent will have a lead in development, and a first strike capacity. This is a situation that we want to avoid at all costs, and one that we should seek to achieve for ourselves.

As a rule of thumb, the opening should be devoted to the big D: DEVELOPMENT.

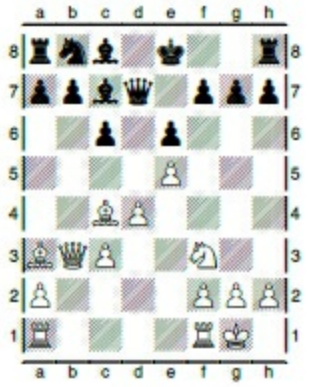
In the opening, if a move doesn't aid our development we should treat it with the up-most suspicion, and give serious consideration to rejecting such a move.

Unfortunately, this is a part of the game where many amateur players go wrong. In the next section we examine some typical errors in thinking and planning.

Mistakes in the opening.

Game one: S.E Pace. G Nottingham 2001

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 e6 5.Bxc4 Bb4+ 6.Nc3 Ne4? 7.Qb3 Qe7 8.0–0 Nxc3? 9.bxc3 Bd6 10.e4 c6? 11.e5 Bc7 12.Ba3 Qd7



1.1 W

White's opening has been a major success. White has established a pawn chain from c3 to e5. He has considerable influence and control in the centre. The supported pawn on e5 gives White a space advantage, and exerts a cramp on Black.

White's rooks are connected on the first rank, and all of his pieces are deployed. The bishop on a3 is the jewel in his crown as it prevents Black from castling, thus trapping Black's king in the centre. White is now free to consider how to build upon his advantage.

Black has major problems. He has no grip on the game, and is light years behind in development. Black's queenside pieces languish on the first rank. His queen on d7 is ineffective as is the bishop on c7, and he can't castle.

White went on to win in thirty-three moves, but how did this state of affairs come into being?

White was able to gain the upper hand because Black made a small but telling number of mistakes, let's examine where Black went wrong.

Return to the game, up to move six, Black was fine, but then he made a mistake:

6... Ne4?

What is wrong with this move?

Black's 6...Ne4? is wrong for a number of reasons:

Black identifies a tactical possibility of putting more pressure on a pinned piece, in this case White's knight on c3; this is a typical means of exploiting a pin, but Black's idea is flawed, it is short-sighted.

Black failed to consider White's possible responses to his idea. It is too easy for White to meet Black's 'threat'. White simply plays 7.Qb3, and meets Black's threat with a threat of his own against Black's undefended bishop on b4; this affords White the opportunity to further his development, and has the added advantage for White of combining the queen and bishop on the a2 – g8 diagonal.

Black wasted time, and in the opening time is of essence.

Black violated an opening principle of not moving the same piece twice in the opening without very good reason.

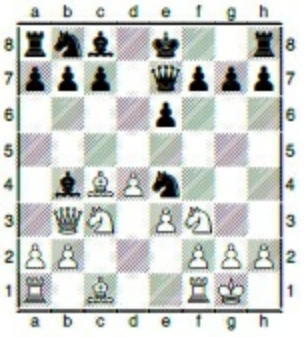
So what should Black have done instead of 6...Ne4?

Castling was by far the better option. Black avoids any waste of time and furthers his development.

7...Qe7 8.0–0

Let's freeze frame here and have a look at the position:

See diagram 1.2.



1.2 B

When White castled on move eight he broke the pin against his knight on c3, this gives rise to a situation where Black's knight on e4 is undefended and is attacked by White's knight on c3.

Black is faced with an uncomfortable dilemma. How does he best respond to the threat against his knight on e4?

Black has various options, but they all involve a worsening of his position.

Black has A, 8...Bxc3. B, 8...f5. C, 8...Nxc3?. or D, 8...Nf6.

A, 8...Bxc3 does at least allow Black to maintain his knight on e4, but after 9.bxc3, White has the very useful 10.Ba3. This does not prevent Black from furthering his development with 9...0-0, in which case he can meet 10.Ba3 with 10...Nd6, but White can march on in the centre with 11.e4, and White is clearly better.

B, 8...f5, this looks horrible for Black. White gets very promising play with 9.Nxe4 fxe4 10.Ng5!, and Black's dilemma only deepens.

C, 8...Nxc3, as was played in the game.

D, 8...Nf6, relocating the knight to f6 maybe Black's best attempt, although he wastes more time moving the knight for a third time and White retains a healthy initiative with 9.e4: 9...Bxc3 10.bxc3 Nxe4 11.Re1 f5 12.Ba3, and for the sake of pawn White is far better.

Black's problems can be traced back to 6...Ne4? The game continued:

8...Nxc3? 9.bxc3 Bd6 10.e4 c6?

Black sees that White has the pawn advance of 11.e5, trapping his d6 bishop, accordingly Black creates a retreat route for his bishop, but this means of saving the bishop concedes the a3 – f8 diagonal to White.

Better for Black was 10...Qd8, when he could have met 11.e5 with 11...Be7, maintaining his dark-squared bishop on the a3 – f8 diagonal, this was a telling mistake, as White is now permitted to deploy his dark-squared bishop on a prime diagonal.

11.e5 Bc7 12.Ba3 Qd7

And we arrive at the starting position, diagram 1.1, in which White enjoys a big lead in development. Black is hard pressed to compete on equal terms, and White went on to win.

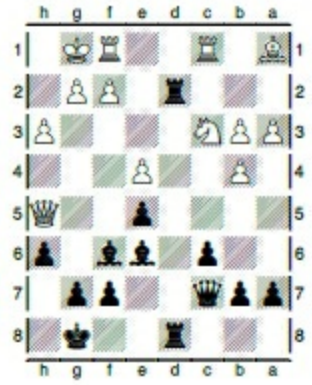
1.3 W

The prime lesson to be learned here is don't waste time in the opening. Develop in an economic manner. Don't play cheap tactical shots that have little to no justification, and don't concede important lines to your opponent.

Game two: Wndows. G S.E Birmingham 2001

1.d4 d6 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.e4 c6 4.Bd3? e5 5.dxe5? dxe5 6.Nf3 Nbd7 7.0–0 Be7 8.h3?! 0–0 9.a3?! Qc7 10.b4 Rd8 11.Ng5 h6 12.Nf3 Nf8 13.Nh2? Ne6 14.Ng4? Nd4 15.Nxf6+ Bxf6 16.Qh5 Nb3 17.cxb3 Rxd3 18.Bb2 Be6 19.Rac1 Rd2 20.Ba1 Rad8

See diagram 1.4.



1.4 W

We join this game at move twenty. The opening phase should be concluded by this stage, and both sides should be embarked on the middelegame. However, it appears that Black is in the middlegame whilst White is still struggling with development.

Black has a number of advantages. The most marked of which is his grip on the d file. White has a compromised pawn structure on the queenside, and his b3 pawn is hanging.

Black has only one issue – his bishop on f6 is passive. White, on the other hand is confronted with a need to compete in the open d file, to defend his pawn on b3, and to bring his bishop on a1 into the game, Black stands better.

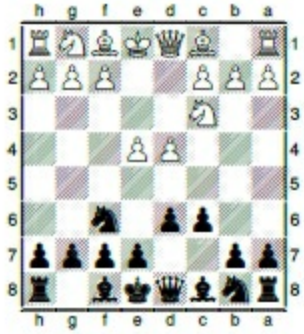
For this set of circumstances to come into being, White must have gone wrong somewhere, and this is indeed the case.

Let’s go through the game and discover where White was at fault and why.

1.d4 d6 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.e4 c6

Now is a good time to freeze frame and view the current position.

See diagram 1.5, on the next page.



1.5 W

After the initial three moves White has a clear advantage.

White occupies the centre with his pawn duo. These pawns exert an influence in Black’s half of the board, their range is felt from c5 to f5; most of these squares are contested by Black’s pawns on c6 and d6. White doesn’t have undisputed control of these squares but he is not displeased with the impact that his central pawns exert in Black’s camp.

Both of White’s bishops have free-range and easy access to the board. White’s central pawns on the fourth rank have gained space.

If we measure White’s inroads against Black’s position we see a stark disparity.

Black has no pawns in the immediate centre. Only one of his bishops – the c8 bishop, has access to the game. Black’s queen has an open diagonal from d8 to a5, so the queen has a means of developing, but Black is lacking

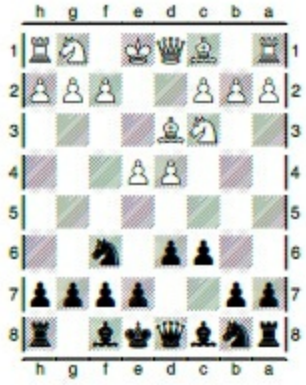
in space and central control.

Suffice to say, from these early observations, that White stands better and has a promising platform.

Returning to the game:

4.Bd3?

See diagram 1.6.

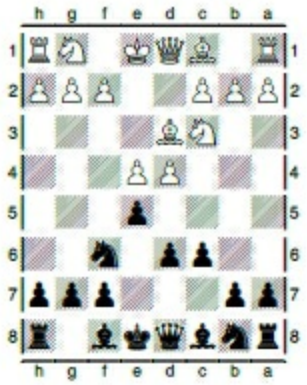


1.6 B

When we develop a piece from the first rank it should ideally improve the scope and influence of that piece. The newly introduced unit should make a contribution, but 4.Bd3?, does nothing for the bishop; its scope has not been enhanced, and its appearance on d3 has no impact upon proceedings.

For White to benefit from the bishop's presence on d3 he needs to advance the e4 pawn to e5, this would give the d3 bishop a new diagonal to operate on and its scope would almost double; with the White pawn on e5 the d3 bishop's influence would be felt as far a field as h7; it would be probing Black's kingside, it would be very active, a piece to be proud of, Black too is aware of this.

4…e5



1.7 W

White is denied the option of advancing his e pawn. Black's pawn advance in the centre firmly shuts the door in the face of the d3 bishop; with the result that White's bishop on d3 is stillborn. The bishop has no more squares available to it now than it did on its original square of f1. The bishop's quality of life has not been improved, and it makes no impact upon proceedings; and what's more, Black's pawn on e5 now challenges White's undefended pawn on d4, this gives White a problem.

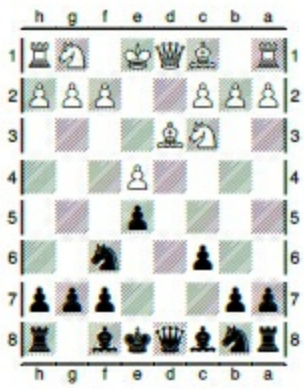
White's problem, however, is of his own making. He should have played 4.Nf3. Knights are the workhorses of the opening. The knight on f3 would have prevented Black's 4…e5, and the option of Bd3, and advancing his e pawn to e5 may still have been available to White, but instead White has allowed Black to place a pawn in the centre. White has effectively invited Black to take a step closer to equality. In doing this White degrades his own position and dilutes his advantage. This is an elementary failing on White's part, a failure to read the game.

5.dxe5?

Why oh why has White played this?

White has invested time and energy obtaining a central pawn duo. The two pawns abreast in the centre confer an advantage on White. Having made these inroads in the centre White should be consolidating his gains. Instead White dissipates his centre. White is devolving, not evolving, this is not the way to make progress.

5…dxe5

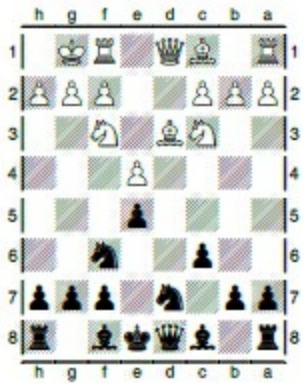


1.8 W

Black has complete equality in the centre. Black matches White's solo pawn on e4 with his own pawn on e5. White's bishop on d3 is no more than a great big pawn. Moreover, on d3 the bishop blocks the scope of the queen. In terms of quantity White retains a lead of two pieces in the field to Black's one, but in terms of quality he has no advantage at all.

The pawn exchange in the centre has created a fixed strategic feature. The d file is now an open file. If one side can gain control of this open line then he will have a big plus as he will be able to use the open line to feed pieces into the heart of his opponent's position, therefore, gaining control of the d file, or at least contesting this open line, should be a major aim for both players.

6.Nf3 Nbd7 7.0-0



1.9 B

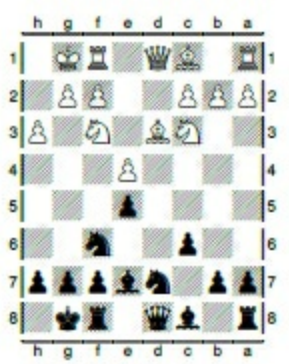
White furthers his development. He has deployed his king's knight to its best square – f3, applying pressure to Black's central pawn on e5, and he has brought his king away from the dangers of the open centre to relative safety on the edge of the board.

White has three pieces developed to Black's two, and White has castled. Black has to play catch up.

7…Be7 8.h3!?

This move does not directly contribute to White's development. However, it has a useful purpose. White wants to bring his bishop to the central e3 square, but if he plays this now the bishop could be hit by a Black knight coming to g4, thus White secures the safety of the bishop prior to developing it, and the pawn on h3 provides the White king with a useful bolt hole on h2, thus reducing the possibility of a back rank mate, but it drops a tempo allowing Black to catch up in development.

8…0-0



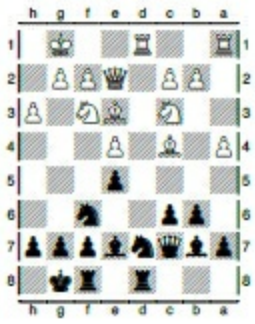
1.10 W

Both sides have completed the development of their kingside and brought the king to a safer position on the edge of the board. It is now time to draw breath and think about the next stage in development. White needs to play his queen to e2, the bishop to e3, and contest the open d file by playing a rook to d1.

Black too needs to develop his queen, most likely on c7, bring his c8 bishop off the back rank and likewise play a rook to the d file to contest this open line.

The game is finely poised. Although White has made a couple of unnecessary concessions he is not worse; he should complete his development before Black does, and he might entertain the notion of improving his d3 bishop. White has the option of placing this piece on the a2 – h7 diagonal by sliding the bishop over to c4. He would first have to prepare this with a pawn advance to a4. If White omits this move then as soon as the bishop sticks its head out on c4 Black could take a swipe at it with …b5, causing White to lose tempo. This could be a likely position in the next four moves with best play:

9.Qe2 Qc7 10.Be3 b6 11.a4 Bb7 12.Bc4 Rad8 13.Rfd1 With the following position:



Neither side has any telling advantage, and neither side has any weaknesses or major disadvantage.

White, however, finds another means of continuing:

9.a3?

This is completely unnecessary. In no shape or form whatsoever does this move aid White's development, White loses time. White is motivated to play 9.a3 as a prophylatic to prevent Black from playing his bishop to b4. White sees this potential bishop move as a threat, but it isn't. White does not want Black to play 9…Bb4, and then exchange on c3 with …Bxc3, after which White ends up with doubled pawns in the c file after recapturing on c3 with the b pawn, but White is seeing ghosts. He sees danger where there is no danger. In the event of 9…Bb4, Black loses time by moving the same piece twice in the opening and White can simply meet 9…Bb4, with 10.Bd2. In the event that Black captures on c3 with 10…Bxc3, White takes back with the bishop, retaining structural integrity.

Thus 9.a3, is a further concession on White's part. One inaccuracy wont cost you the game, but five or six will do you no good at all, and this is the path that White seems to be set upon.

9…Qc7 10.b4?

This is another move that ignores development, and a another inaccuracy. White has lost two vital moves for developing his pieces, there will be a price to pay for this.

But why has White gone off on this tangent on the queenside? White

thinks he has the opportunity to gain space on this side of the board and exert a cramp on Black. This is an idea best saved until after he has completed his development.

In the opening phase of the game development is paramount. Advancing the b pawn also takes support away from the knight on c3, this piece now stands undefended, and as such it is a potential tactical weakness, and you might have noticed that the c2 pawn now appears backward.

10…Rd8

Black is first to the open d file.

White has fallen behind in development and his queen is now on the same open line as Black's rook, this is dangerous for White; he should now move his queen and try to match Black's presence in the d file.

11.Ng5? A complete farce!

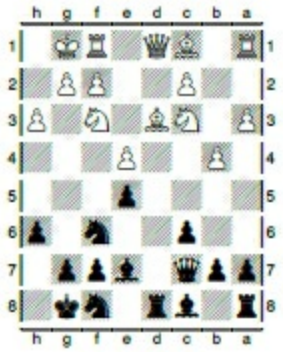
Yet again White flouts development. He can't keep ignoring development and get away with it.

White is bent upon launching an attack. He intends to play his bishop to c4 next move when the bishop and knight combine to attack f7. This idea is effortlessly swatted aside by Black.

11…h6 12.Nf3

The White knight has been kicked back to its starting point. White has made three moves with this knight and it is right back where it started from on move six. Zero progress, lots of wasted time, and lost opportunities to develop.

12…Nf8



1.11 W

Black intends to bring the knight back into the game with either Ng6 – Nf4, or Ne6, when the knight has the option of finding a home on d4 or f4, thus increasing the potential of this piece. Meanwhile, the knight moving away from the d file uncorks Black's rook on d8 and the diagonal is opened for the c8 bishop.

White needs to develop. Bringing the queen into the game on e2, thus removing it from the d file, where a Black rook lurks, looks mandatory.

13.Nh2?

That's the fourth time White has moved this knight!

White needs to concentrate on development.

13…Ne6

Black's knight is deciding which of two advantageous squares it wants to arrive at, either d4 or f4.

White still needs to develop.

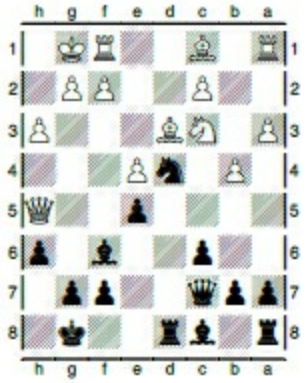
14.Ng4?

The gallant steed gallops into the thick of the fray. Heedless of what dangers it may encounter. Noble Needy is going to win the game single-handed.

This is the fifth time that White has moved the same piece, and what has he achieved? Now the knight is going to exchange itself for the Black knight on f6, thus delivering a ‘knockout blow’ to Black’s defences, should Black resign?

Again and again White has wasted time. Again and again White has failed to develop. Surely the axe he places over his own head will come crashing down in the not too distant future.

14…Nd4 15.Nxf6+ Bxf6 16.Qh5



1.12 B

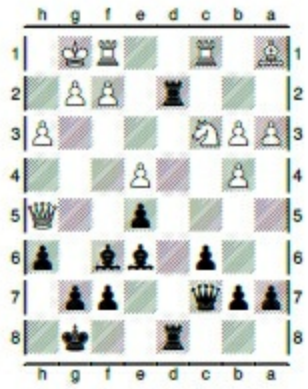
Now it’s the queen’s turn to win glory. The knight tried to win the game on its own but failed, so now White sticks the queen into no man’s land where it is totally isolated on an irrelevant post on the edge of the known world. What on earth can the queen do here all on its own? Is White looking at the hopeless Bxh6? Perhaps he is thinking about a kingside attack based on the general advance of the kingside pawns.

At a deeper level a cursory examination of White’s piece placement reveals a tale of woe: apart from the queen being out of touch with all other parties, his bishop on d3 remains no more than a big pawn, and makes a zero contribution, his knight on c3 is doing nothing, his bishop on c1 is still sleeping on the first rank, and his rooks are inactive.

By contrast, Black’s pieces are much better placed: his knight on d4 is active on a central post, he has a centralised rook in the open d file, and he is ready to bring his c8 bishop to the central e6 square. Black can think of

middlegame tactics, whereas White needs to re-think everything.

Black seizes the initiative:



1.13 W

16…Nb3! 17.cxb3 Rxd3 18.Bb2

Black has taken control of the open d file and succeeds in feeding his rook into White's position on the second rank. White's b3 pawn is up for grabs. White is lacking co-ordination, his pieces are separate units operating independently of each other. Black went on to win.

White went wrong big time in this opening.

He made un-forced errors with 4.Bd3?, allowing 4…e5, when he could have played the more sensible 4.Nf3, preventing 4…e5. He quickly went wrong again with 5.dxe5, this dilutes his centre and allows Black full equality in the centre.

However, White made rapid progress in development thereafter with 6.Nf3 and 7.0-0.

Having completed the development of his kingside White thinks that the task of development is a done deal. White believes that he is now free to get on with the all important job of mounting an attack against his opponent, but White still needed to develop his queen, his c1 bishop, and get a rook on the open d file, but no! White wants to get on with the middlegame.

After castling we see White embark upon a number of escapades. First of all he seeks space on the queenside, ignoring development. Then he tries an

‘attack’ with his knight on move eleven – 11.Ng5, hoping to rope the bishop in on the act with an intended Bc4, next move, but he failed to consider that 11.Ng5, was easily repulsed and his knight ends up back on the same square – f3, without making any progress, again this ignores development. Then he went galloping around with his knight wasting more time and consistently failing to address the most important issues of developing his queen and bishop and contesting the open d file; after the great adventure with his knight collapsed, he rushed the queen up the board to a post where it did nothing.

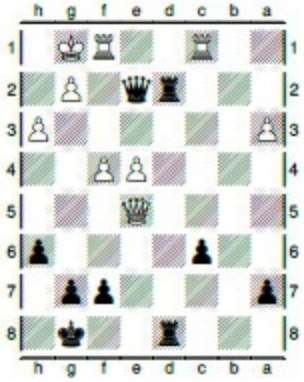
White’s misadventures cost him control of the only open line – the d file which Black brought under his control and used to stage a successful invasion of White’s second rank with a rook on d2.

The prime lessons to take away from this example are: do not waste time in the opening. Do not consistently move the same piece with no gain at the expense of development, and do not ignore open lines. The rest of the game is given below.

21.b5 Qb6? 22.bxc6 bxc6 23.Na4?! Qb5 24.Nc5 Bxb3 25.Nxb3 Qxb3 26.Bxe5? Qb5?

27.f4 Bxe5 28.Qxe5? Qe2

See diagram 1.14.



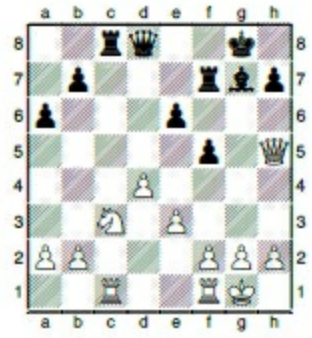
1.14 W

White cannot defend against mate on g2 without suffering a game losing

loss of materiel. White resigns. 0–1

Game three: S.E Ferber. J Birmingham 1994

1.d4 d5 2.c4 Nf6 3.Nc3 c6 4.Nf3 g6 5.Bf4 Bg7 6.e3 0–0 7.Rc1 Nh5?! 8.Be5 f6?! 9.Bxb8 Rxb8 10.cxd5 cxd5 11.Nxd5 f5 12.Be2 Be6 13.Nc3 a6?! 14.Ng5 Bf7 15.Nxf7 Rxf7 16.Bxh5 gxh5 17.Qxh5 e6 18.0-0 Rc8



1.15 W

Black's opening left a lot to be desired. Black has emerged from the opening two pawns down. His kingside pawn structure has been compromised, leaving his king less than secure.

Where did Black go wrong?

Black's play up to move seven was fine.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 Nf6 3.Nc3 c6 4.Nf3 g6 5.Bf4 Bg7 6.e3 0–0 7.Rc1

Black has adopted a less well known line of the Slav Defence – The Schlechter Variation. Black seeks to test White's knowledge of theory; if White is unfamiliar with this line of play he could go wrong. Black hopes to surprise White and throw him back on his own resources.

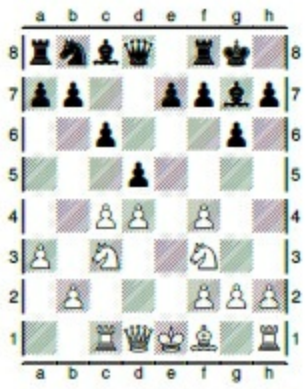
7...Nh5?

1.16 W

Black is already looking at a middlegame idea when he needs to develop, have we seen this before?

Black has fallen prey to temptation. White's bishop on f4 is a good piece and Black would be more than happy to exchange this well placed bishop for his knight, but in order to bring about this desirable exchange Black has moved the same piece twice in the opening, and placed his knight on the edge of the board, and as we know - knights are very poor on the edge of the board. The only way that 7…Nh5?, can be justified is if White falls in with Black's plan and obligingly allows Black to go ahead with his intended exchange of knight for bishop on f4. Say, for example, White takes his brain out for a second or two and plays 8.a3?, then Black can play 8…Nxf4, and after White recaptures with 9.exf4 White would have a ruptured pawn structure and a weak pawn on d4.

See diagram 1.17



1.17 B

Black had better options on move seven; all of which comply with sound opening principles of development, such as 7...Bg4, pinning the f3 knight and developing, 7...Qa5 developing the queen and pinning the c3 knight, thus preparing to bring his knight to e4, or 7...Qb6, developing his queen and targeting the b2 pawn.

Following Black's 7…Nh5?, White can not avoid the exchange of his bishop for one of Black's pieces, but he is not going to oblige Black and gift him the exchange that his misguided heart desires, instead White will seek to exchange his bishop on more favorable terms, back to the game.

8.Be5

White offers a like for like exchange of dark-squared bishops, but this is not what Black wants so he turns it down, however, the manner in which Black declines this exchange is a mistake.

8…f6?

Far better here would have been 8…Nf6, returning the knight to its best square. Black hasn't lost any time to speak of and his position is fine, but 8…f6?, is terrible, in fact Black has managed to make three mistakes all bundled up in one move.

In the first instance he has marooned his knight on h5, this knight has no retreat squares, and can be trapped by White playing h3 and g4, secondly Black stunts his bishop on g7. Bishops need open lines, Black has just

denied his g7 bishop an open line and shut it in, and last, but far from least, Black has opened a diagonal to his king – the Black king is exposed to harm on the a2 – g8 diagonal, prior to 8…f6?, this diagonal had been closed and Black's king was much the safer for it.

9.Bxb8 Rxb8

Let's freeze-frame and look at the position after Black's recapture on b8.

1.18 W

As a result of Black's 7…Nh5?, and 8…f6?, Black is left with a number of weaknesses.

On move four, regressing slightly, when Black played 4…g6, his position was sound. Only three moves later he has to face problems that were all of his own making. Black is guilty of being short-sighted, his plans were based on imagined short-term gain, without sufficient consideration to the long-term consequences.

Although Black's mistakes bring about there own punishment White is now able to add to Black's cup of woe by directly exploiting the worst of his mistakes - exposing his king.

10.cxd5 cxd5 11.Nxd5

1.19 B

Black dare not recapture on d5 with his queen due to White's bishop coming to c4 and pinning the Black queen against his king. Black would lose his queen for a bishop and a knight, therefore, Black must suffer the loss of an important central pawn.

The slough of despond deepens for Black as White now has a number of positional pluses; apart from the extra pawn, White has a rook in the open c file, a centralised knight on d5, and a sound pawn centre with a two to one advantage in this sector.

11…f5

Black is at least able to solve two of his three problems, he has opened the diagonal for his g7 bishop, thus breathing new life into this piece, and he has made a retreat square available to his knight on h5, which now has access to f6, so the knight is no longer in danger of being trapped with h3 and g4.

12.Be2

12.Bc4 was a good alternative, but White only has eyes for the Black knight on h5. Black cannot delay bringing this piece back into the fold, it is dangerously exposed on its present post.

12…Be6 13.Nc3 a6?

Black finds yet another un-forced error.

This pawn move on the edge of the board serves no purpose whatsoever.

Black would seem to be fearful of a possible Nb5 by White, but the knight can do no damage to Black on this square, so why take precautions against a move that can do no harm? Black was seeing ghosts.

Black has pressing problems on his kingside. The newly developed bishop on e6 stands guard on the a2 – g8 diagonal, defending his majesty by closing down this possible avenue of approach, but the bishop is undefended. Black's knight is still vulnerable on h5, and White has a move that exploits these factors – Ng5. Black had an opportunity to prevent this telling incursion with 13…h6; this pawn move guards against a real threat, not an imagined one.

14.Ng5

Black is undone, see diagram 1.20, on the next page.

1.20 B

On the one hand Black is faced with the attack against his undefended bishop on e6, and on the other he faces the loss of a pawn and the compromising of the pawn structure around his king due to the threat of Bxh5 gxh5 and Qxh5.

14…Bf7

This is the least of two evils. 14…Qd6, or Qd7, would have met White's threat with a developing move, but this is lukewarm solace for Black.

15.Nxf7 Rxf7 16.Bxh5 gxh5 17.Qxh5

Black is ruined. He is two pawns down, his king is exposed, and his pawn structure is compromised. White went on to win in forty-eight moves.

Black started off well enough in this example. He selected a rare variation of the Slav which was an enterprising idea, but he quickly went wrong with 7…Nh5?

Black was impatient. He had no need to move the knight a second time, and the aim of exchanging his knight for White's bishop on f4 was flawed from the get go as White can easily play 8.Bxb8, leaving Black with a precarious knight on h5, and Black has to invest time bringing the wayward knight back into play. Much better for Black was 7…Bg4, this furthers Black's development.

However, White decided to meet 7…Nh5?, with 8.Be5, and Black immediately went wrong again with the horrendous 8…f6? Black should have swallowed his pride and played the knight back to f6, but now the damage is done, and opening the a2 – g8 diagonal to his king resulted in the loss of his pawn on d5, this is damaging but not fatal.

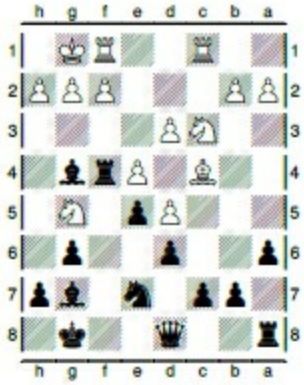
The big mistake came with 13…a6? Black reacts to an imagined threat of White's knight coming to b5, and totally overlooked the far more dangerous incursion on the kingside of 14.Ng5.

Given the disposition of Black's kingside pieces, i.e., the undefended bishop on e6 and the knight on h5, Black is left reeling, 13…h6, would have allowed Black the time to play his knight back to f6, and although a pawn down he has a fighting chance to get back into the game.

The prime lesson to take away from this game is that the opening is that phase of the game dedicated to development, so develop your pieces! It's not rocket science. Don't snatch at ideas, such as 7...Nh5? Think things through; if a move in the opening doesn't aid development, then don't play it, and don't expose your king.

Game four: Garner. D S.E Correspondence 1994

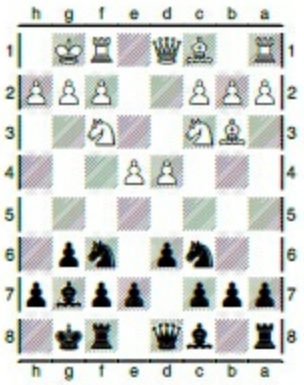
1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.Bc4 0–0 6.Bb3 Nc6 7.0–0!? Bg4 8.Be3 e5 9.d5?! Ne7 10.Rc1? Nd7 11.Bc4 f5 12.Qd3 a6 13.Ng5 f4 14.Bd2 Nc5 15.Bxf4 Nxd3 16.cxd3 Rxf4



1.21 W

White played well up to a point in this opening, but on move seven he makes a critical choice of 7.0-0.

See diagram 1.22, on the next page.

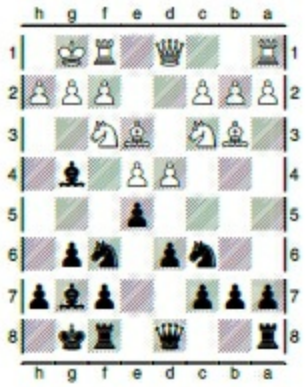


1.22 B

It is understandable that White should want to further his development with the sound castling move, but better for White would have been the prudent 7.h3. This prevents Black from developing his bishop to g4, with the an annoying pin against the f3 knight; in allowing this pin White gifts activity and purpose to one of his opponent's pieces. Is that a good idea?

White has committed his light-squared bishop to the other side of the board, it cannot come back to the kingside without a good deal of maneuvering, and it's abundantly apparent that 7...Bg4, is a useful move for Black; as a rule of thumb we don't want our opponent to make good moves, therefore, in cases such as this 7...Bg4, should have been prevented. White now encounters a number of problems due to the pin on his f3 knight.

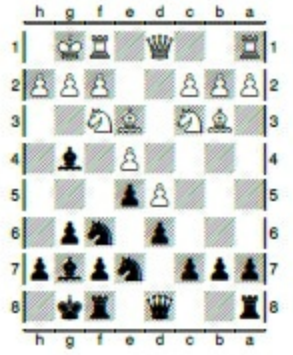
7...Bg4 9.Be3 e5



1.23 W

Black's counterattack in the centre is uncomfortable for White. Black threatens ...Bxf3, and if White is to retain his d4 pawn he must recapture on f3 with his g pawn, compromising his king's position; whereas 9.dxe5 allows Black to capture on e5 with his knight, putting more pressure on White's knight on f3, therefore, White has little option but to advance in the centre with 9.d5, but this kills his light-squared bishop.

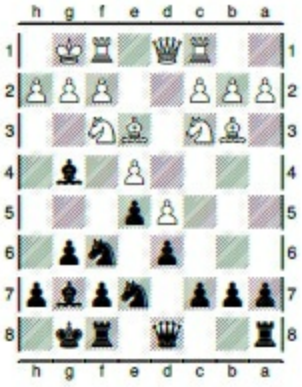
9.d5?! Ne7



1.24 W

What now for the b3 bishop? When White developed the bishop to c4 on move five the bishop looked to be full of potential, but now the former promising young star of the future can't even get an understudy role. This bishop is now totally out of play. What is White to do with this useless creature? It almost seems like White is playing a piece down. True White has gained space in the centre with the pawn advance to d5 but this only compounds White's problems as the d5 pawn further limits the scope of the poorly old chap on b3.

9…Ne7 10.Rc1?



1.25 B

What is the rook doing on this square?

Rooks are played to open or half open files, or centralised. The rook has not been improved for being placed in the c file, it has no scope. Does White intend to push the c pawn? If that is the case he must first move the c3 knight, but doing this drops the pawn on e4, as the knight is the only piece

defending the pawn on e4, so assuming that White's plan is to push the c pawn, why else put the rook on c1?, then White has to jump through hoops to organise the advance of the said pawn.

He would first have to find a defender for the e4 pawn, say Qd3, but this allows Black to exchange on f3 with Bxf3, and the resulting recapture on f3 with the g pawn leaves the White king exposed and the pawn cover in front of the king is compromised, this is very far from ideal. To mobilise the c pawn White has to play 11.h3 and after 11…Bxf3 12.Qxf3 he has the queen in place to defend the e4 pawn, then he can move the c3 knight to say e2 and finally advance the c pawn, long winded, but if this is not his plan then what is the rook doing on c1? The rook seems like a sympathiser for the bishop on b3, they share a common problem, they are misplaced.

10…Nd7

With the centre sealed Black turns his attention to the kingside, he intends to advance the f pawn with f5 – f4, and to commence a kingside assault. White, however, sets in motion a number of different and conflicting plans.

11.Bc4

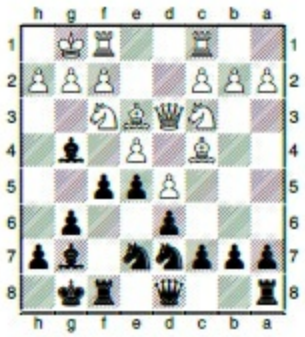
White finds a way to bring this forgotten star back to the land of the living, he intends to play the bishop back to e2, breaking the pin against the f3 knight. Well at least the bishop is doing something on e2 and has been rediscovered, but what of the idea of advancing the c pawn? Isn't that why the rook was placed on c1? How does the idea of bringing the bishop back to e2, where it could have gone on move five, fit in with the idea of advancing the c pawn? It doesn't, it's a brand new idea. Perhaps White is putting the plan of advancing the c pawn on hold for the time being whilst he gets the b3 bishop back into the game.

11...f5

Black continues with his plan.

12.Qd3

Oh!



1.26 B

I thought the plan was to bring the bishop back into play on e2, and this was being done prior to kicking off plan A, of advancing the c pawn, that's why the rook was placed on the c file, wasn't it? But now the queen goes to d3 blocking the path of the bishop on c4, but hold on – the queen now defends the e4 pawn so White can move the c3 knight and advance the c pawn, but the bishop on c4 is in the way of the c pawn; and Black can now exchange on f3 compromising the pawn structure in front of White's king and exposing the king in the g file.

No! I got it wrong. White has discovered a whole new plan. Eagle eyed White has become aware of an Achilles heel in the heart of Black's position – the e6 square. If he can get the knight on f3 to e6 via g5, it would result in a fork against Black's queen and rook – a knock out blow, but as things stand this cannot be played because the knight on f3, is pinned against the queen by Black's bishop on g4, but White has found a pin breaking solution – move the queen! It's ground breaking stuff. Shame that he overlooked that Black can walk all over this idea by simply taking the knight on f3.

Now, however, it's Black's turn to be clever

12…a6!?

Black has a deep-seated idea of his own. He is happy to let White have his cake, but not to eat it. Black accommodates the first part of White's plan and permits the knight to come to g5, but in doing so White is taking a risk. Black has seen a few moves down the road and anticipates a means of

tripping White up, and presenting White with a problem that could spread panic in the ranks causing White to go wrong and lose materiel. The clue lays in the restricted scope of White's pieces, in particular the White queen.

13.Ng5

White stands on the very edge of victory. On his next move White will stamp his authority on the game with the world winning move 14.Ne6, forking the Black queen and rook, he's just a mere whisper away, and after all what can Black possibly do now to stop him?

13…f4

Oh! That's a bit inconvenient. Black's f pawn now attacks White's bishop on e3, moreover, the advance of the f pawn has opened a diagonal for Black's bishop on g4 allowing the bishop to cover the e6 square, so now the grand idea of 14.Ne6, winning the whole world, fails to 14…Bxe6, but surely this is no more than a mild spoiler by Black, after all White can move the bishop out of harm's way with 14.Bd2 and then continue with 15.Ne6. The plan of playing the knight to e6 is still on. White readjusts his aim and moves the bishop back to d2.

14.Bd2?

White should have continued with 14.Ne6. After 14…Bxe6 15.dxe6 Nf6, the game is more or less equal, which suggests that Black made a mistake in failing to take the knight on f3, when he had a chance on move twelve.

But how many safe squares does the White queen now have? None!

14…Nc5

1.27 W

White’s queen is attacked by the Black knight on c5 and it can’t find a safe retreat, the queen is lost.

15.Bxf4

In a desperate bid to rescue her majesty White offers his bishop up as a sacrificial lamb, if Black accepts the lesser prize of the bishop then White can usher the queen to safety on e2, but Black doesn’t have to accept the bishop.

White sacrificed the wrong piece, 15.Ne6 attacking Black’s queen and obliging Black to play 15…Bxe6, and now White can save his queen, all be it at the expense of a knight, back to the game:

15…Nxd3 16.cxd3 Rxf4

White is a queen down for a pawn!

He could have resigned, but he played on for a further thirteen moves.

Initially White played the opening well, but having played the light squared bishop to the queenside, he will miss the bishop’s influence on the kingside, this became apparent after 7…Bg4. White should have prevented this pin with 7.h3 delaying castling for one move.

After 8…e5, White is obliged to advance his d pawn with 9.d5?, but this move entombs his light-squared bishop. White will have to jump through hoops and waste time getting this isolated piece back into the game.

White's big problem has been with planning. He just didn't know what to do or how to do it. This sequence of problems commenced with the mysterious 10.Rc1?, and was compounded with 11.Bc4, which wasn't an entirely bad idea of bringing the isolated bishop back into play on e2, but then he snatched at yet another idea that cut right across this plan with 12.Qd3, this allows Black to smash White's kingside up with 12…Bxf3, but White ignored or just didn't see this point, as by now he had the new idea of playing the knight on f3 to e6, forking Black's queen and rook. This demonstrates yet another failing on White's part, he is guilty of seeing only *his* ideas and totally failing to appreciate that Black *too* has ideas.

Each plan that White came up with was immediately abandoned in favor of a new idea. There is a saying in chess: "A bad plan is better than no plan at all." In either case you will lose, but at least you had a plan. White demonstrated this maxim.

White failed to think things through when he was confronted with 13… f4, at this point he had to play 14.Ne6, but instead he moved the e3 bishop, totally failing to see the danger from a Black knight coming to c5. Yet again showing that he had no appreciation for his opponent's plans and ideas; and when confronted with 14…Nc5 he panicked and played 15.Bxf4, when 15.Ne6, would have saved his queen.

Even after 9.d5, there was no reason for White to lose this game. He could have continued with 10.Qe2, completing his development and then 11.h3. The game is equal. White has no advantage, but he shouldn't have lost.

What lessons can we learn from this example?

The prime lesson is that one plan is enough; don't adopt one plan and immediately shelf it in favour of another, if your first plan is solid then follow it. Prophylactic thinking is worthwhile; don't allow your opponent a good move if you can put a stop to it. White could have prevented Black's 7...Bg4, with the timely 7.h3. Develop your pieces meaningfully. White's 10.Rc1?, was a pointless waste of time.

Exploiting a lead in development

Having a lead in development confers a number of advantages. In the first instance there is the obvious numeric imbalance in favour of the better developed side; naturally it is better to have two developed pieces facing off against one, than the other way around. This situation should be preferential to the side that has the extra deployment of materiel. This comes with the proviso that the additional piece, or pieces, are effectively placed; it is of no value to have extra forces in the field if those forces have no effective field of fire.

A further advantage in these cases is the pressure that is felt by the underdeveloped party. Having a lag in development generates an urgent need to catch up; this pressure is not felt in the better-developed camp, therefore, the player that possesses a lead in development has the added advantage of having time on his side, and can utilise this factor by improving his position.

Superior mobilisation of resources affords the opportunity for a first strike option. As a rule of thumb when we have more pieces developed than our opponent we should be looking at ways of opening the game up so that our weight in numbers can tell; in this fashion we can create open lines for our pieces and generate threats that the underdeveloped side will be hard pressed to meet.

There is, however, a need for caution. We must not assume that since we have a lead in development that the win will come automatically. A lead in development can prove to be wafer thin; and even a substantial lead can disappear in the space of two or three moves, therefore, it is imperative to identify the exact nature of the advantage that a lead in development gives us, and to work with this. We need to avoid thinking that since we have a lead in development we should immediately start sacrificing, and that our opponent will just fall to bits.

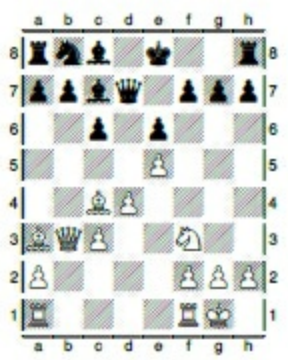
The starting point of our investigation is to recognise that we have a lead in development and then to conduct an accurate assessment and evaluation of

the position; following this we can decide how best to utilise our lead.

Game one: S.E Pace. G Nottingham 2001

Position 2.1, occurred in the previous section: **Mistakes in the opening**.

In this section we are going to re-visit this game and take a deeper look at how play progressed from this point.



2.1 W

White unquestionably has a lead in development.

As the better developed side, White should first identify the exact nature of his advantage.

So what exactly is White's advantage here?

Of all his developed pieces, only the bishop on a3 is worth its salt. The bishop and queen battery on the a2 – g8 diagonal are misplaced. These two pieces are biting on granite. Black's pawn on e6 blunts their effectiveness. White should consider migrating the bishop and queen to the neighboring diagonal, b1 – h7. On this line the two pieces point at the Black kingside. White's knight on f3 is optimally posted, but it has no targets, and doesn't seem able to bring its weight to bear in any meaningful fashion. Meanwhile both of White's rooks need to find worthwhile employment.

White's problem here is that he has no natural targets to take aim at, and, therefore, the majority of his developed pieces need deploying onto more effective posts. Black's lack of development, and the poor quality of what

little development he does have, creates the illusion that White is much better, however, White still has work to do.

Accordingly White sets about re-deploying his pieces:

13.Ng5

At first glance it seems that the knight is meandering around for no good reason, but White intends to re-route this knight to d6 via g5 and e4. Thus White is utilising his lead to improve the placement of his knight; if White's knight arrives on d6, it would put the Black king in check, and Black would have to either exchange off his dark-squared bishop for the knight on d6 or move his king. White has the time for this journey with his knight.

13...b5?!

The good point about this move for Black is that it attacks White's bishop on c4, and obliges White to take time out in removing the bishop from harm's way, thus Black gains time against the White bishop on c4, but this was a piece that White had targeted for re-deployment in any case, so to an extent, Black is aiding White in his plan; and White now has a natural target for his light-squared bishop – the Black pawn on c6. In advancing the b pawn Black has created a backward pawn on c6, and his rook on a8 is still on its starting position making it vulnerable to a White bishop on the h1 – a8 diagonal.

14.Be2

Incidentally White's original plan of migrating this bishop to the b1 – h7 diagonal could still be played, but in the event of 14.Bd3, Black has a tactic with 14...Bxe5, and Black wins a pawn, but the continuation of: 14.Bd3 Bxe5 15.dxe4 Qxd3 16.Qb4 Qd8 17.Qf4, leaves White in a commanding position. However, White opts to keep his pawn on e5 for its cramping effect on Black's position, and he likes the new idea of deploying his bishop on the h1 – a8 diagonal.

14...Bd8

The third time Black has moved this piece. Black hasn't cottoned on that

the White knight is aiming for d6.

15.Ne4

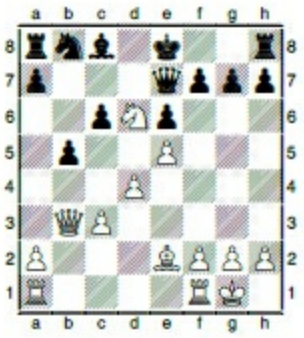
White’s knight continues its journey to d6.

15...Be7

The *fourth* time Black has moved this piece.

16.Bxe7 Qxe7 17.Nd6+

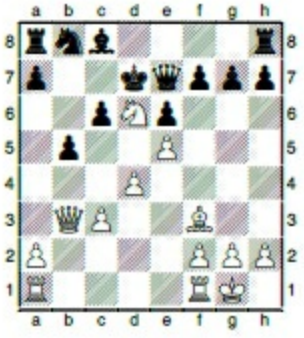
See diagram 2.2.



2.2 B

A difficult position for Black; he must move his king to either d8 or d7, as the bishop on c8 is attacked and undefended.

17...Kd7 8.Bf3



2.3 B

White's plans have largely come to fruition. After move twelve White hunkered down for an assessment and evaluation and determined that most of his developed pieces were in need of re-deployment. White planned to transfer his knight to the more effective central square on d6, and that aim has been achieved. He also resolved to bring his bishop and queen to a new diagonal. The bishop on f3, although not the original planned line, is now much better and has a grip on a natural target – the c6 pawn. White still enjoys a massive advantage.

Black has lost castling rights and his king is stuck in the centre. White now needs to bring his rooks into the game

18...a5?

Black overlooks a tactic. White can play 19.Nxb5, winning a pawn. Black is probably aiming for an attack against White's queen with 19...a4.

19.a4

White rejects the win of the b pawn. Advancing with 19.a4 is guaranteed to open the game; a pawn exchange on the queenside cannot be avoided as Black has limited options. White is threatening 20.axb5, winning a pawn, so Black can either exchange with 19...bxa4, he can advance the b pawn to b4, in which case White has 21.cxb4, or Black can play 19...Ba6.

In all of these eventualities White will succeed in opening the game up and bringing his rooks into play, which was all part and parcel of his plans after move twelve.

19...bxa4 20.Rxa4 Ba6 21.Rfa1 Bc8 22.Rxa5 Rxa5 23.Rxa5

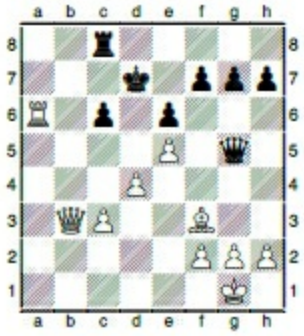
2.4 B

White has succeeded in the second part of his plan - feeding his rooks into the game. Although some materiel has been exchanged off White's edge remains overwhelming, and he has the devastating threat of 24.Ra7+, skewering the queen against the king and forcing the win of queen for rook, and meanwhile White's queen hits the undefended knight on b8. Black cannot avoid both a loss of materiel and the game.

Black continued with 23...Na6, after which he may as well give up. White played:

24.Nxc8 Rxc8 25.Rxa6 Qg5

See diagram 2.5.



2.5 W

Black can resign, but the game continued for a further eight moves with White winning.

To recap, if we go back to the starting position:

2.6 W

At this point White undertook an assessment and evaluation of the position, and determined that he needed to post his developed pieces more effectively, and to open the game for his rooks.

White took his time. He did not rush in headfirst trying to make something of nothing. What is required in such positions is a cool, calm and objective approach.

Game two: Kasparov. G Korchnoi. K Zurich 1995

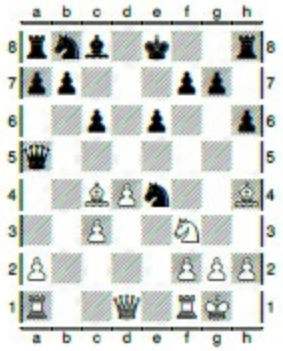
1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 d5 4.d4 c6 5.Bg5 h6 6.Bh4 dxc4 7.e4 Bb4

This is a very seldom-played move. More common are 7…g5 and 7…b5. It is possible that Korchnoi was seeking to take his illustrious opponent out of book, but I'm sure that Kasparov would not object.

8.Bxc4 Bxc3+ 9.bxc3 Qa5 10.0–0

White seems to be gambitting a pawn to gain a lead in development. My gut reaction to 9…Qa5, was 10.Qc2, surely this secures both the e4 and c3 pawns, but this is a mistake as Black happily continues with 10…Nxe4, and if White grabs the knight with 11.Qxe4 then 11…Qxc3+, is horrible for White. But Black is pursuing a risky line, although he can win a centre pawn, Black is falling way behind in development, not to be recommended against Kasparov, and White quickly capitalizes.

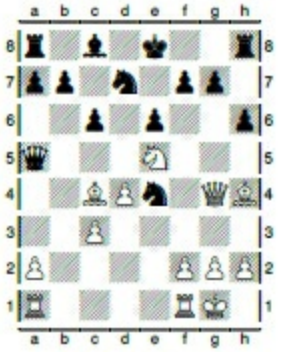
10...Nxe4



2.7 W

11.Ne5

The knight takes up residence in the centre of the board, but more importantly the knight vacating f3, opens the d1 – h5 diagonal for the queen allowing White to bring the queen into play on the kingside: 11…Nd7 12.Qg4



2.8 B

Developing with a threat: the queen forks the knight on e4 and attacks the g7 pawn.

But what exactly is the nature of White's advantage?

White has fully completed his opening. His rooks are connected on the first rank, his king is safe, his developed pieces are well placed, and his queen attacks the g7 pawn and the knight on e4; the pawn on c3 is up for grabs, but it's a pawn that Black can't afford to take. White has the initiative.

Black has problems. Immediately he has to answer the threat to his knight on e4 and pawn on g7. He is way behind in development. He needs to castle and find a means of bringing his c8 bishop into the game.

12…g5 13.Qxe4 Nxe5 14.dxe5 gxh4

Exchanging off two minor pieces doesn't help Black.

15.Rab1

White's lead in development allows him to take his time and build on his advantage.

Bringing the rook to bear in the half open file obliges Black to keep his bishop at home on c8, thus curtailing Black's development.

15…h3 16.Rfd1

2.9 B

White grabs the open line. White has little need to defend the g2 pawn, if Black takes on g2 then White's king has a pawn to hide behind, and in the meantime White improves his position, all the trump cards are in White's hands.

It's not so much a case of White having superior development, although this is a telling factor, but more a case of Black having little to no developed pieces, and as a consequence Black cannot compete on anywhere near an equal footing.

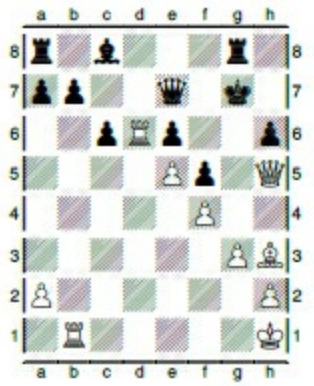
16…Rg8

This threat is easily swatted aside.

17.g3 Rg5 18.f4 Rg8 19.Bf1 Qxc3

The pawn is of no significance. Black only has two developed pieces to play with, his bishop on c8 and the rook on a8 remain out of the game, Black is effectively two pieces down and he can't castle.

20.Bxh3 f5 21.Qe2 Kf8 22.Qh5 Qc5+ 23.Kh1 Qe7 24.Rd6 Kg7



2.10 W

25.Bxf5! Qf7

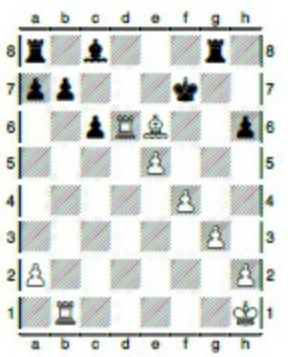
Taking on f5 leads to a collapse for Black:

25...exf5 26.Qxh6+ Kf7 27.Qh5+ Kg7 28.Rg6+ Kf8 29.Rf6+ Qxf6 30.exf6

And Black can resign. But Black is not long for this world in any case, back to the game:

26.Qxf7+ Kxf7 27.Bxe6+!

See diagram 2.11.



2.11 B

Curiously this resolves Black's development problem as 27…Bxe6, and Black has connected his rooks on the first rank, but White quickly gets his sacrificed materiel back and has by far the better endgame. Rather than play out a lost game Black resigns. 1–0

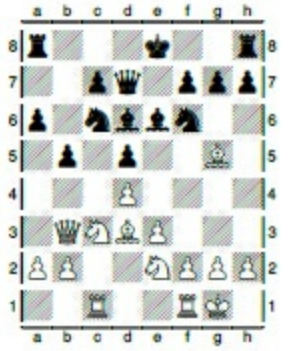
The game could have continued: 27...Bxe6 28.Rxb7+ Kg6 29.Rxe6+ Kf5 30.Rxc6 Rgd8 31.Kg2 h5 32.Rh7 Ke4 33.Rc4+ Ke3 34.Rc2 Rab8 35.e6 Re8 36.f5 Kd3 37.Rf2 Ke4 38.e7 Ke5 39.f6

White has an overwhelming advantage.

Again we see another example of White taking his time, playing to his strengths, and being objective.

Game three: S.E Pakenham. J Birmingham 1994

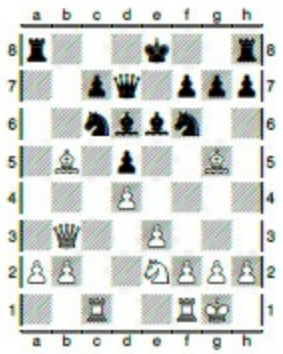
1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 d5 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 Bb4 6.Qb3 Nc6 7.e3 a6? 8.Bd3 Be6 9.Nge2 b5? 10.0–0 Bd6? 11.Rac1 Qd7



White has a lead in development; but what exactly is the nature of his advantage?

Black is close to completing his development by castling on his next move. Critically, however, White occupies the half open c file with a rook. White's lead does not appear significant, certainly not game winning, but there are noticeable weaknesses in Black's camp. The knight on c6 is under-defended. True the c6 knight is held by the queen, but the knight and queen are on the same diagonal, a light squared diagonal, the knight is crying out to be pinned and won by White's light-squared bishop, all that White has to do is get his bishop on the a4 – e8 diagonal. Secondly the knight on f6 is held only by a pawn. White has the option of exchanging his bishop on g5 for Black's knight and Black's pawn structure will be damaged after the recapture on f6 with the g pawn, and finally, Black's pawn on c7 is backward.

In this instance White has a tactical means of exploiting Black's frailties, and thereby realizing his advantage: 12.Nxb5! axb5 13.Bxb5.



2.13 B

The knight on c6 is attacked twice and Black has no means of defending the knight a second time. White will get his materiel back plus two pawns, virtually a won game for White.

13...0–0?

Black goes into panic mode, this makes things worse for Black.

13…Rb8 was a better try, back to the game: 14.Bxf6 gxf6 15.Bxc6 Qe7 16.Bxa8

And White's advantage is overwhelming.

16…Rxa8 17.a3 h5 18.Qb7 Re8 19.Nc3 h4 20.Nxd5 Bxd5 21.Qxd5 Rd8 22.Qh5 f5 23.Qxf5 1–0

Black wasted time in the opening with 7…a6, 9…b5 and 10…Bd6. As a consequence White obtained a lead in development and a tactical advantage, due to the lack of defense for the knight on c6. White was quick to exploit this, winning two pawns. White also took advantage of Black's knight on f6, exchanging bishop for knight and fracturing Black's pawn structure on the kingside.

Black made further mistakes with 14…0-0, ensuring the loss of the exchange, at which point White is two pawns and the exchange to the good, a considerable lead. Black lost two more pawns after 19…h4, and finally on move twenty-three Black dropped another pawn and lost the will to continue.

Game four: Short. N Giri. A Amsterdam 2021

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nc3 d5 3.Bg5 Nbd7 4.e3 e6 5.Qf3 c5 6.0–0–0 a6 7.Nge2 Qa5 8.Bxf6 Nxf6 9.g4 b5 10.g5 Nd7 11.Nf4

2.14 B

White has chosen a risky, but aggressive opening. He has committed his king at a very early stage to queenside castling, this invites an immediate attack, and Black has obliged with a pawn storm on the queenside, and by placing his queen on an active post on a5.

However, in advancing his queenside pawns Black uncovers his rook on a8 to potential attack from the White queen on f3 which stands on the h1 – a8 diagonal. Black needs to watchful of this potential attack against his rook.

11…cxd4 12.Ncxd5

White sacrifices a pawn and a knight to open the diagonal to Black's rook on a8. Viewed at a deeper level White is sacrificing materiel with a view to maintaining the initiative and keeping Black on his back-foot.

12…exd5 13.Qxd5 Ra7

Black is obliged to break off his attack against White's king in order to save his attacked rook.

14.Bh3

White completes his development.

14…Be7

2.15 W

Black edges towards completing his development, but White has a move that secures the initiative.

15.Qxd4

White strikes the rook on a7 and simultaneously hits the g7 pawn. This presents Black with a nasty problem to solve – save the rook and drop the g7 pawn and then the rook on h8 is attacked and his king is permanently forced to stay in the centre, or save the g7 pawn and give back materiel, the rook on a7.

15…0–0

In the interests of king safety Black sacrifices the exchange. Black is an exchange down for a pawn, but his king is much safer, or so it appears.

16.Nh5

White threatens checkmate with 17.Qxg7, a knight on the rim is not so dim!

16… f6

Black is forced into making an ugly concession, advancing the f pawn opens the a2 – g8 diagonal to his king

17.Be6+

White delays the immediate capture of the rook on a7 in order to improve his light-squared bishop.

17…Kh8 18.Qxa7

Black’s knight on d7 is now attacked three times and only defended twice and White’s bishop on e6 stands guard for the a2 pawn, thus Black’s attack against White’s king has lost ground.

18…Bc5

Black counters with an attack on White’s queen.

19.Qa8 Ne5

2.16 B

Black's position is difficult and he finds a desperate bid for counter-play which only works if White goes wrong. White could now win the c8 bishop with 20.Bxc8, but then Black could play 20…Qc7, pinning the White bishop on c8. What Black is really hoping for is a retreat of the White bishop if, for example, White now meekly withdraws the bishop to b3 – 20.Bb3 there follows 20…Bg4, and Black breaths new life into his attack against White's king as he discovers an attack from his rook on f8 against the White queen on a8, and after White moves his queen Black gets the exchange back with 21… Bxd1, or better still he takes the hanging piece on h5, but White is far too long in the tooth to fall for this.

20.gxf6 gxf6

20…g6 might have been a little better for Black.

Note that 20…Bxe6. is very bad for Black as 21.fxg7+, picks up the Black rook on f8 and wins, back to he game:

21.Qg2

White threatens mate on g7. Black must defend.

21…Ng6 22.Qc6

Renewing the threat to win a piece.

22…Bb4

Black hopes for 23.Bxc8, after which he has 23…Qxa2, and White has to defend against the threat of mate, but White sidesteps this with ease and still has the threat of winning a piece.

23.Kb1 Black resigns.

White's play was bold from the outset. He posted his king very early on the queenside, inviting an attack. He sacrificed a knight and a pawn on move twelve in order to keep the initiative and put Black on his back-foot. White cemented the initiative with 15.Qxd4, forking Black's rook and the g7 pawn. After this point White pummeled Black's failing defences with a number of body blows that further retained the initiative and broke Black's spirit of resistance.

Gaining a lead in development with gambits

In this section we look at deliberate ploys to engineer a lead in development by offering a gambit.

Attack is the prime purpose. In return for the materiel offered, usually a pawn, the attacker obtains open lines for his pieces. However, the gaining of open lines is only the beginning. Once this goal is achieved the next objective must be a rapid mobilization of the pieces.

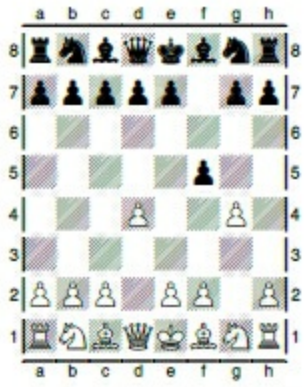
Putting your opponent on his back foot, and keeping him off balance is a prime aim. To do this the attacker must continue to push. In such circumstances materiel considerations often become secondary. Pawns are chattel in the wind, and pieces only exist for the purpose of being cast down upon the alter of sacrifice, but never needlessly.

Maintaining the press and keeping the initiative is essential, a momentary lapse is oblivion. Sharp tactical play is the order of the day and accurate calculation is crucial.

Such play often embraces high risk; sometimes sacrifices are made in which the outcome is not entirely clear. This kind of game is not to everybody's liking, when the stakes are so high the line between victory and defeat can be marginal. Nerves of steel and a strong heart are required.

Game one: S.E A. N. Other Internet 2019

1.d4 f5 2.g4

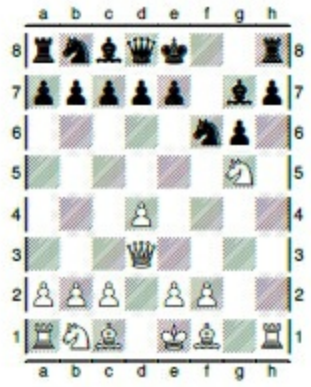


3.1 B

This is a gambit line against the Dutch, it is sometimes called the anti Dutch Spike, or the Krejcik, Korchnoi or Alapin, depending on what first moves are played. In our example game White plays the immediate 2.g4, this can be delayed with 2.h3, intending to advance the g pawn next move – the Korchnoi variation, or White may arrive at this line with 2.Qd3 The Alapin variation.

The key idea is to open lines against Black's kingside followed by the rapid deployment of White's knight to the g5 square.

2…fxg4 3.h3 gxh3 4.Nxh3 Nf6 5.Qd3 g6 6.Ng5 Bg7



3.2 W

White has all the necessary players in place. Note the open lines that White has created, he has opened the h file for his rook, his queen is deployed on the b1 – h7 diagonal, and the knight on g5 is eyeing the h7 and f7 squares

in Black's camp. You might also note that Black's king is exposed on h5 - e8 diagonal. Open lines and a potentially exposed king, are bread and water for the attacker.

Black fails to see the danger, and anticipates castling next move. He thinks he is in clam waters, everything's defended, right?

7.Rxh7

The point is to remove the protection from the g6 square which enables White's queen to gain access to g6 with a fatal check.

7...Nxh7

It doesn't matter what piece Black recaptures with as g6 is wide open to invasion from White's queen.

8.Qg6+ Kf8 9.Qf7#.

White responded to 1…f5 by offering a gambit pawn with 2.g4. Black accepted the materiel and took again on move three with 3…gxh3, this opens the h file for White's rook, better for Black was 3…g3 giving back the materiel and keeping the h file closed.

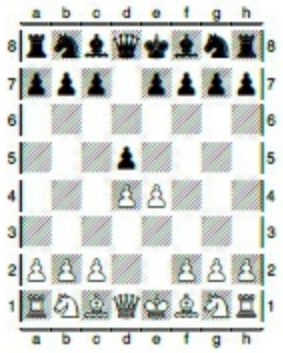
After capturing on h3 with his knight and posting his queen on the b1 – h7 diagonal White catapults the knight to g5, and is ready to sacrifice his rook on h7.

Black fails to see the danger and pops his bishop into g7, and White unleashes the rook sacrifice on h7, which leaves the g6 pawn up for grabs with a lethal queen check coming.

Black should have made some elbow room for his king with either 7…d6 or 7…d5, but he was oblivious to the looming check on g6 and its consequences and instead he exchanges on h7 with 7...Nxh7, this seals his fate.

Game two: Theon. P Marzolo. C France 1999

1.d4 d5 2.e4



3.3 B

This is called the Blackmar Diemer Gambit.

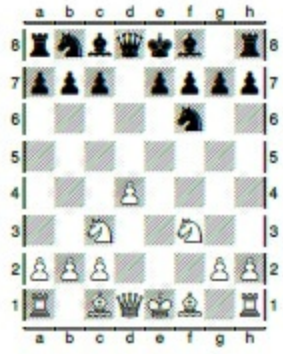
White offers his e pawn. The beauty of this gambit is that White obtains open lines for both bishops regardless of whether Black accepts the gambit or not.

2…dxe4 White can now gain time by targeting Black's pawn on e4.

3.Nc3 Nf6 4.f3 exf3?

Taking on f3 only serves to accelerate White's development, better for Black is to give the pawn back with 4…e3.

5.Nxf3



3.4 B

For the sake of a pawn White has obtained a lead in development. Both of his knights are employed on optimum squares, both bishops have free-range, the queen has easy access to the game and White can castle short in the not too distant future, bringing his rook to f1, where it will be in an active position.

5…e6

It might seem strange to shut in the light-squared bishop, after all, this is Black's only piece that has any scope, but Black sees the need to develop his kingside and quickly bring his king to safety by castling.

6.Bd3 c5

Counterattacking White's centre is a desirable aim, but getting the king to safety without delay is a wiser course of action, Black can take aim at White's centre *after* he castles.

7.Bg5 cxd4 8.Bxf6

White seizes the opportunity to exchange a valuable defender of Black's kingside.

8…Qxf6

White takes advantage of the placement of Black's queen to gain time, and to centralize his knight.

9.Ne4 Qd8

Black prefers this un-developing queen retreat to the alternatives of 9…Qh6, when the queen may find itself out of play, or 9…Qf4, which would put the queen in the firing line of White's rook after 10.0-0.

10.0–0 Be7

3.5 W

White has amassed a considerable lead in development, but this has come at the cost of two pawns; if Black can hunker down and weather any attack that White can conjure up then the balance will tell in Black's favour. White must find a means of justifying his investment in materiel.

11.Ne5

This naive looking attack against Black's pawn on f7 does not appear man enough. Black can easily meet this simplistic effort by castling, this allows Black to put his king in a safe harbor, or does it?

11…0–0

See diagram 3.6, on the next page.

3.6 W

White still possesses an undisputed lead in development, but what exactly

is the nature of this advantage? Indeed, the question has to be asked: does White have an advantage?

His knights on e5 and e4 look very good. The bishop on d3 has potential. The rook on f1 is actively placed, these are all pluses, but how can this be converted to a win? Has White reached his high water mark? How does he make progress?

White can bring his queen over to the kingside with 12.Qh5, but this can be swatted away with 12…g6. Alternatively White has 12.Qg4, then he can double rooks in the f file, or he has the idea of Rf3, and swinging the rook over to the h file. These ideas appear to have some promise, but in the meantime Black can start to develop his queenside pieces and catch up in development, and White remains two pawns down, and doesn't appear to have anything concrete.

However, if we look just a little deeper into the position we can see that Black's king is not entirely safe. Black lacks a knight on f6 to safeguard his king. The light squares around his king look suspect. His entire queenside is asleep.

White has this one chance to maximize his assembled strike force, and he finds a means of peeling the king out of its comfort zone.

12.Rxf7!

A move that is far from obvious. Even engines don't pick up on it immediately, they prefer 12.Nxf7.

White's secret weapon here is the bishop on d3 and the ability that White's queen and bishop have to combine on the light squares.

Rxf7 13.Nxf7 Kxf7

3.7 W

The Black king is forced out into open ground. It is vulnerable and exposed, and an exposed king is a half dead king.

White closes in for the kill.

14.Qh5+ Kg8

The king must seek a safe refuge.

3.8 W

15.Nd6!

This brings White's bishop on d3 into the game, and White threatens a powerful check on h7; and he has yet to bring up the reserves in the shape of Rf1.

15… Qxd6!?

3.9 W

Black takes the materiel, but his king must now run the gauntlet. White has only three pieces left on the board to Black's five, but all of Black's queenside pieces are still on their original squares whereas White has ready access to the Black king.

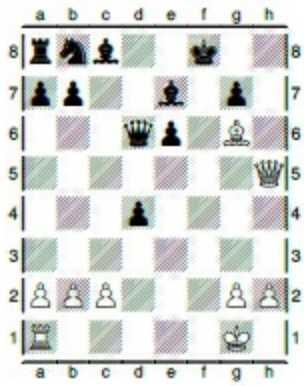
16.Qxh7+ Kf8 17.Qh8+

This is more direct than 17.Rf1+

17…Kf7 18.Qh5+

White weaves a mating net.

19.Bg6



3.10 B

White threatens mate with 20.Qh8#. Black must find an escape square for his king.

19…Bg5

This frees e7 for the Black king, but why give up the bishop? 19…Bf6 or 19…Bd8 achieves the same thing and keeps the bishop.

But 19…Bf6 gives White mate in two: 20.Qh8+ Ke7 21.Qe8#. Whereas 19…Bd8 20.Qh8+ Ke7 21.Qe8+ Kf6 and after 22.Rf1+ White is winning.

So Black jettisons his dark-squared bishop in a desperate bid to distract White, but to no avail.

Back to the game:

20.Qxg5

3.11 B

White is poised to bring his slumbering rook into the game with 21.Rf1+, and to follow this by placing his queen on the h file and delivering mate on h7. Black is a piece up but he only has one piece in play – his queen on d6. Black's entire queenside array remains asleep. White's queen, bishop and rook are too much for Black. Black can try to catch up in development with 20…Na6, and 21…Bd7, but he has no defense against White's mating attack in the h file. Play continued with:

20…Bd7?

Overlooking that this breaks the queen's communication with d8.

21.Qd8#.

White offered a gambit pawn on move two – 2.e4, which Black accepted. White used the Black pawn on e4 as a target, and offered an exchange of pawns on move four – 4.f3, Black exchanges on f3 and accelerates White's development.

Moves five to eleven sees White rapidly mobilizing his forces, which sets the scene for his sacrificial attack on move twelve.

How are we to find these moves? Well, these moves will certainly not volunteer themselves to us.

In order to spot these tactical strikes we must actively seek them out.

Here are a few maxims that might help:

Consider the move that smites.Fred Rienfield.

Look at ever capture and ever check.Fred Riendfield.

When it is your turn to move ask yourself what piece can I sacrifice?

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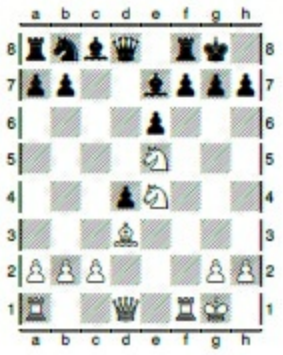
The tactics that we saw here require insight and accurate calculation.

In the end White's bishop and queen working together proved unstoppable. Let's go back to the position after Black's 11…0-0:



3.12 W

Now let’s put these maxims to ourselves:

Consider the move that smites. Consider ever capture and every check.

When it is your turn to move ask yourself what piece can I sacrifice?

There is an immediate check with 12.Nf6+, this opens the diagonal for White’s bishop. There is also 12.Nxf7, and of course – 12.Rxf7.

Let’s say we spot 12.Rxf7, then we must use our imagination, we must calculate and visualize the resulting position.

It is clear that 12.Rxf7, is not of itself the move that kills Black off, there must be a follow up, so we pursue this in our mind’s eye and look at 12… Rxf7, not forced, and then 13.Nxf7 Kxf7, after this we see that Black’s king is dragged out of its safe harbor; now we must envisage the queen coming into the game on h5 with check and more importantly the unleashing of the light-squared bishop after the knight on e4 moves. We should also bear in mind that the rook on a1 can come into the game in the f file.

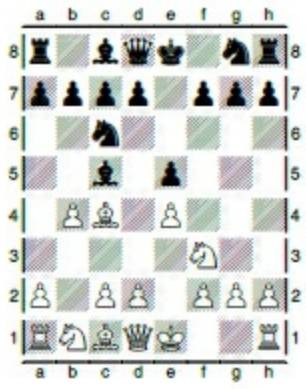
Tactical skills can be worked on and improved by doing masses of tactical exercises, but we must have the courage to play them.

After 15.Nd6 White’s queen and bishop working in conjunction simply overpower Black. Note that for most of the game Black’s queenside pieces remained on their starting squares.

Game three: Blackburn. J A. N. Other Blind Simul Britain

1875

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.b4

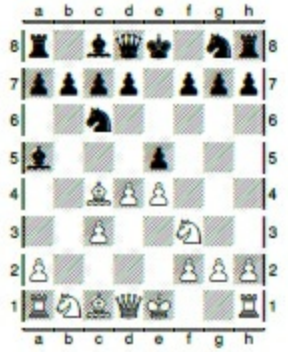


3.13 B

This is called the Evans Gambit. Named after the Welsh Sea Captain William Davies Evans, 1790 – 1872.

4…Bxb4 5.c3 Ba5 6.d4

See diagram 3.14, on the next page.



3.14 B

In return for his pawn White gets a good centre and open lines for his bishops.

6…exd4 7.0–0

White's not interested in getting his materiel back; instead he seeks rapid

development: 7…dxc3 8.Qb3

The first tangible threat - White hits the f7 pawn.

8…Qf6 9.e5

White offers a pawn to open the e file.

9…Qg6

Black does well to decline the poisoned bait, he should try to keep the game closed.

10.Nxc3 Nge7 11.Ba3

3.15 B

White completes his development. Black will have problems developing his queenside pieces, and his bishop on a5 looks out of play. White's lead in development bodes well but he has nothing concrete to take aim at.

11…b5?

Black should castle here, but instead he goes in for a tactical sequence which has little promise.

12.Nxb5 Rb8

Black wants to trap the b5 knight against White's queen and push the a

pawn thus winning the knight.

13.Qa4

Black's tactical ploy is easy to sidestep.

13…a6

Black should have given this idea a wide berth and castled instead.

3.16 W

14.Nd6!+

Why is the knight sacrificed?

To open the e file. Black has left his king in the centre too long.

14…cxd6

Keeping the game closed with 14…Kf8 was preferable.

15.exd6 Nf5

Black's king is laid bare in the middle of the board.

Remember the maxim: An exposed king is a half dead king.

16.Rae1!+

White wastes no time in hitting the Black king. The rook is sacrificed to Black's bishop to maintain the initiative. In this fashion White sustains the press and ensures that Black is kept on his back foot, this is far more important than counting the materiel balance.

16Bxe1 17.Rxe1+ Kf8

3.17 W

White has sacrificed a piece, and the exchange, but seems to be running out of steam.

Black has little coordination between his pieces. His rook on h8 is cut out of the game and his bishop on c8 has no scope. However, his rook on b8 is well placed and his queen on g6 and the knight on f5 are well placed with a threat to win the d6 pawn.

White's bishops have potential but neither one of them has a decent diagonal. However, Black's king and White's dark-squared bishop are on the same diagonal, can White exploit this?

18.Qxc6!

There is no piece so great that it cannot be sacrificed.

In return for his queen White gets the game.

18…dxc6?

Black has to keep the game closed, but he doesn't have a good move to his name.

19.d7+ 1–0

White has two ways to deliver checkmate: Black can block the check from White's bishop on a3 with 19…Nd6, but then White has either 20.Re8#, the knight on d6 can't take the rook because it's pinned against the king. Alternatively White has 20.d8=Q#.

Black went wrong in failing to castle on move eleven and looking for tactical play instead. However, even had Black castled on move eleven White remains well ahead in development and Black is struggling to complete his development.

It was an easy matter for White to slip out of any tactical play that Black hoped for and on move fourteen (14.Nd6+) White commenced upon a barrage of sacrifices to force open lines to the Black king.

This is a good demonstration of opening lines at any cost. First, on move fourteen White sacrificed his knight, two moves later he sacrificed the exchange, then on move eighteen White sacrificed his queen, again, it's all about getting those vitally important open lines, and breaking down the defense.

Remember: ***open lines are the avenues of attack***.

White's play was all the more remarkable since he was blindfolded, not literally, but he was playing without being able to see the board, and it was a simultaneous exhibition, which means he was playing several players at the same time, all blindfold games. This chess superhero was Joseph Henry Blackburn, aptly nicknamed the Black Death, 1841 – 1924. Blackburn was English, and was considered to be one of the strongest players of his day.

Game four: Esserman. M Van Wely. L Orlando 2011

1.e4 c5 2.d4 cxd4 3.c3 dxc3 4.Nxc3

3.18 B

White has sacrificed a pawn; this opening is called the Smith Morra Gambit.

White has open lines for both bishops, a developed knight on c3 and a half open d file, White has ample compensation for the pawn.

4…Nc6

Black tries to catch up on development, but remains a tempo down.

5.Nf3 e6 6.Bc4 a6 7.0–0 Nge7

7…Nf6 looks better to me.

8.Bg5 f6

3.19 W

Black is seeking to control the e5 square, but he will have to invest time in playing his knight to g6 in order to be able to develop his bishop to e7.

9.Be3 Ng6 10.Bb3

White's bishop is vulnerable on c4 so White takes time out to bring the bishop to a safe square.

10…b5 11.Nd5

3.20 B

This is deep, and there are a number of key ideas behind the demise of the noble knight. The knight is offered up as a sacrifice for two reasons: A, White gets the open e file, and B, White has a means of restricting the development of Black's kingside thus ensuring that Black's king remains fixed in the centre.

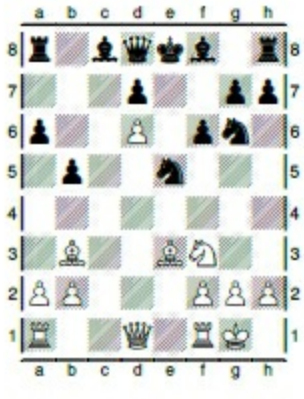
11…exd5?!

Black could afford to ignore the d5 knight and just get on with his development with say 11...Be7, but the knight on d5 looks intimidating and Black gave in to the temptation.

We have to fast-forward a couple of moves before we see the benefit to White of his knight sacrifice.

12.exd5 Nce5 13.d6

See diagram 3.21.



3.21 B

This is the full fruit of White’s sacrifice of his knight.

It is now virtually impossible for Black to finish the development of his kingside. White has gained the open e file, he has opened the diagonal for the bishop on b3, this bishop is probably the most powerful piece on the board at the present time, and White ensures that Black’s king remains stuck in the centre.

13…Bb7

It looks like Black could ease his position by exchanging knights with 13…Nxf3+, but this is a mistake:

13...Nxf3+ 14.Qxf3, attacking Black’s rook on a8, 14…Rb8 15.Bc5, this is much stronger than 15.Ba7, as by defending the d6 pawn, White maintains the bind on Black’s kingside and keeps the Black king rooted to the centre. 15…Ne5 16.Rfe1, and now 17.Rxe5 is very difficult to stop, and leads to mate in two, say for example, Black plays 16… g6, then it’s curtains - 17.Rxe5+, and 18.Qf7 next move is mate.

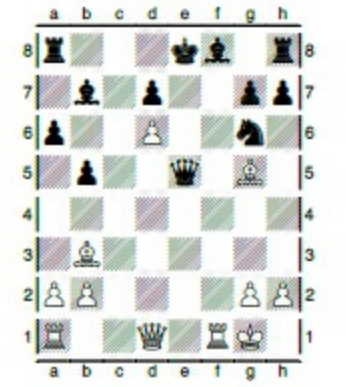
Back to the game:

14.Nxe5 fxe5 15.f4

White continues to open lines.

15…Qf6 16.fxe5 Qxe5 17.Bg5!

See diagram 3.22.



3.22 B

White offers a second piece, but not for nothing.

17…Be7

Black tries to give materiel back in order to seek safety for his king, which can now take up residence on d8.

Taking the bishop on g5 is a capitulation: 17…Qxg5 18.Qe1+ Be7 Black must interpose, moving the king to d8 gives White a quick mate: 18…Kd8 19.Qa5+ Kc8 (19…Ke8 20.Bf7#.) 20.Qc7#. It might seem that Black can block the queen check with his knight or queen, but neither attempt works: 18…Ne5 19.Bf7+ Kc8 and we have the familiar pattern of White playing his queen to a5 with check and giving mate next move on c7. Blocking White's queen check with 18…Qe5 fails for the same reason: White has a forced mate with 19.Bf7+ Kd8, and Qa5+ then Qc7#.

Back to the game.

18.Bf7+ Kd8

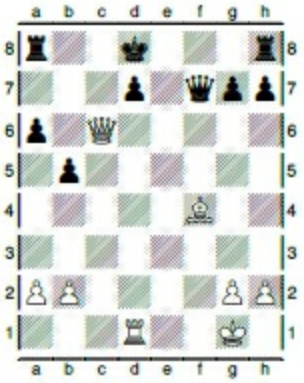
18…Kf8 is also a quick win for White: 19.dxe7+ Nxe7 20.Be6+ (from the rook on f1) 20…Nf5 (20…Ke8 21.Qxd7#) 21.Rxf5+ Qxf5 22.Qd6+ Ke8 23.Qe7#.

Back to the game:

19.dxe7+ Nxe7 20.Qd2 Kc8 21.Rac1+ Nc6 22.Rfd1 Qf5 23.Bf4 Qxf7

This doesn't help Black.

24.Qd6 Kd8 25.Rxc6 Bxc6 26.Qxc6



3.23 B

And Black is lost.

White threatens the rook on a8, and he has Bg5+, Black can prevent Bg5+, with h6 but then the a8 rook falls followed by the loss of the rook on h8, and if Black saves the rook on a8 with say 26…Rc8, then 27.Bg5+ Ke8 28.Qxc8 is mate. 1–0

Proceeding from the acceptance of White's gambit pawn on move three, White rapidly accelerates his development.

Black accepts the knight sacrifice on move eleven, and White gains an open line against the Black king which becomes stranded in the centre. White increases his dominance with 13.d6, this opens a line for his b3 bishop and retards the development of Black's kingside.

White continues to open lines with 15.f4. Black tries to give back materiel on move seventeen (17…Be7) in order to slow down White's initiative, but it's already too late for Black and 18.Bf7+, commences a hunt and kill exercise for White against the Black king. This culminates on move twenty-six (26.Qxc6) as Black is faced with a disastrous loss of materiel.

PART FOUR: TYPICAL METHODS OF ATTACK, HOW AND WHY THEY WORK

Part A: The fianchettoed king

In this part we will consider attacks against the castled king with a fianchetto.

In Part B, we will look at attacks against the king without the fianchetto.

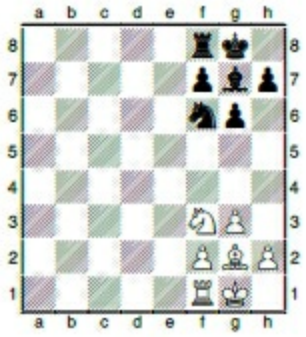
The road to successful attacks in chess is paved with open lines and exposed kings.

Remember our mantras:

Open lines are the avenues of attack.

An exposed king is a half dead king.

In most of our games we will be facing an opponent who has castled his king.



1.1

In diagram 1.1 we see the typical castled king with the fianchettoed bishop.

Firmly embraced within these walls the king lives in a very grand castle indeed. Every pawn is rooted in granite. This method of castling invests three pieces in the defence of his majesty. The knight and king defend the h

pawn, the king and rook defend the f pawn, the g pawn is defended by two of its colleagues in the h and f files, and the bishop holds the colour sequence, defending h3 and h6 respectively, and lending support to the noble knight, what could go wrong? How can any attack prevail against so mighty a fortress? Surely the king will die of old age before any spear point pierces his ramparts.

It is against this well prepared defence that we will be matching ourselves.

Here are a few elements of comfort for the attacker:

The king looks very secure, but the defenders may be driven off, the shield wall may be dealt a fatal blow causing it to buckle and break. The king may send his guardians into combat, leaving himself bereft of defenders, or he may order the shield wall to advance, and in doing so create fatal weaknesses.

We have identified the following essential ingredients for a successful attack in the introduction:

1, A PLAN OF ATTACK.

2, IDENTIFICATION OF A POINT TO ATTACK.

3, THE MOBILISATION OF SUFFICIENT FORCE.

To supplement this we should bear in mind that to attack a castled king we need to open lines and expose our opponent's king.

The following quote comes from The Chess Attacker's Handbook:

"Open the game at virtually any cost, and aim your pieces towards the target"

Michael Song – The Chess Attacker's Handbook.

Incidentally, this book was written in collaboration with Razvan Preotu,

but M Song wrote this part.

Although the quote refers to attacking an un-castled king in the centre, it lends itself well to attacking a castled king on the edge of the board.

To put our opponent's king in checkmate we must be able to expose it to an attack, and in order to do this we must create open lines for our pieces, with the exception of the knight, which brings us back to our mantras:

Open lines are the avenues of attack.

An exposed king is a half dead king.

Below we consider a number of games that demonstrate well-known techniques for attacking this particular method of castling.

Game one: Brikov. L Ivanov. I Tula Tula 2007

1.e4 d6 2.d4 g6

1.2 W

Black advances his g pawn; in doing so he is sending a clear signal of intent, and we should sit up and take notice. Black is going to fianchetto his bishop and most likely castle kingside.

As previously stated - this system of castling provides a mighty stronghold for the king to reside in, but it comes with a design flaw, and that flaw is that the g pawn is advanced one square further up the board. The

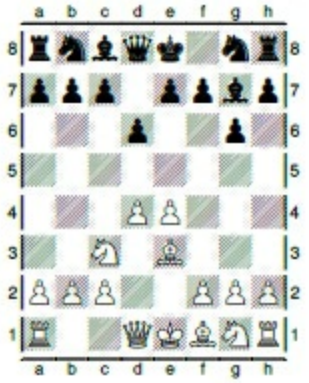
slightly advanced nature of this pawn gives an attacker something to latch onto.

3.Nc3 Bg7

As predicted Black posts his bishop into the fianchetto, and White prepares a reception for the bishop.

4.Be3

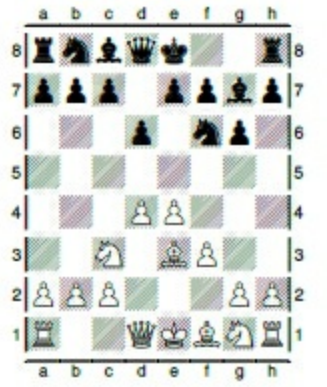
See diagram 1.3.



1.3 B

The idea behind this move is to create a bishop and queen battery on the c1 – h6 diagonal, with the ultimate aim of exchanging off the defensive bishop on g7. Swapping this bishop off, is a key factor in diluting the defences of a fianchetto system of castling.

4…Nf6 5.f3



1.4 B

White puts another critical brick in place. The prime purpose of the pawn on f3 is to provide a jumping off point for an advance of White's kingside pawns. The advance of pawns against a castled king is a prime method of attacking a castled king, and is frequently seen in situations where kings have castled on opposite sides of the board.

The advancing pawns will be used as battering rams. Their job is to seek contact, and thereby conflict, with the pawns in front of a castled king. When the attacking pawns make contact with the defending pawns they can be exchanged off for the defensive pawns in front of the king, and in so doing they tear-apart the king's defenses leaving the king naked and vulnerable to attack. A bonus of the pawn on f3 is the support it gives to White's centre, and it shields the e3 bishop from a possible attack by a Black knight by defending the g4 square against an invading knight.

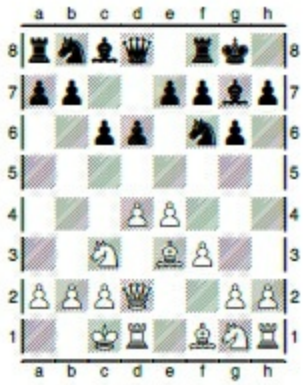
5…c6

Black anticipates White's intention of castling long, and prepares his own pawn storm on the queenside. The pawn on c6 is similar to White's pawn on f3, and has the same idea of providing a jumping off point for a possible b5, a5 and perhaps b4, but 5…c6, is also a kind of waiting move as well. Black avoids immediate castling and invites White to show more of his hand.

6.Qd2

White completes the bishop and queen battery.

6…0–0 7.0–0–0



1.5 B

Black’s king stands fast in its stronghold. His position projects strength and invincibility. There is an un-spoken dare in the air – my walls are too strong to breach; try, if you dare.

White has put in place the foundations for an assault against Black’s redoubt. White will test the boast of invincibility.

Let’s examine what White has done in the first seven moves.

White has, A - created a comfortable centre with pawns abreast on e4 and d4.

White has, B - put in place a potential pawn advance against Black’s castled king.

White has, C - created a bishop and queen battery on the c1 – h6 diagonal with the intention of exchanging the defensive bishop on g7.

These individual factors are component parts of a larger design. White’s plan is to attack Black’s castled king. At this early stage there is no specific target for White to take aim at.

The plan of a kingside attack is notional. This general concept of a kingside attack is like a coat hanger, other ideas, which will be more specific, will be placed on the hanger as the attack progress.

Having laid the foundations of the attack, it is essential for White to proceed onto the next phase and advance his pawns against Black's king. White will then open lines against the Black king.

Remember: ***Open lines are the avenues of attack.***

Black has the same urgent need to open lines against White's king.

7…b5

Black commences his attack against White's king.

8.Bh6

White puts the first part of his plan into action – exchange off the defensive bishop on g7.

8…Qa5 9.Kb1 This is an important move, and introduces the theme of prophylaxis.

Basically prophylaxis is the taking of preventative measures.

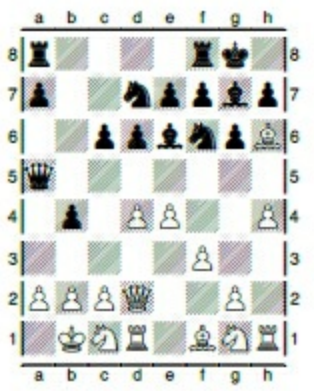
White realizes that Black has good prospects against his king with the idea of …b4 – removing the defensive knight on c3 and winning the pawn on a2 with his queen, after which White's king will be vulnerable. To side step this White puts a defence in place, this is good prophylatic technique.

When the king castles on the queenside it has a longer front to guard, moving the king to b1 shortens the line. The king establishes communication with the pawn on a2, consequently White's king is safer.

When we set out to attack, we must always keep a weather eye on what our opponent is doing. It is not enough just to blindly pursue our own attack. Indeed, such a policy can easily lead to disaster.

9…b4 10.Nce2 Be6 11.Nc1 More defensive measures are required.

11…Nbd7 12.h4



1.6 B

With his king’s house secure White can now go over to the attack, and put in place the next phase of his plan - opening lines against Black’s king, and the h file in particular.

12…Nb6 13.h5 Nc4?!

This gives White an easy exchange and helps de-congest and develop his kingside pieces.

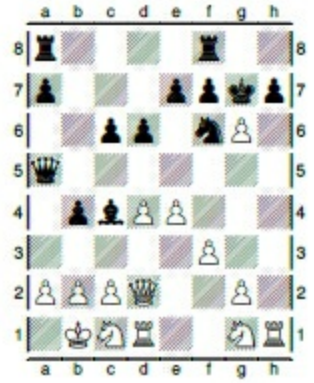
14.Bxc4 Bxc4

Now White’s plans effortlessly fall into place.

15.Bxg7

Exchanging off the defensive bishop.

15…Kxg7 16.hxg6



1.7 W

Opening the h file. White's queen and rook combine and threaten to invade into the heart of Black's position with Qh6+.

We hasten to add that open lines must be occupied by pieces. Open lines absent a piece to man them are just empty space, a vacuum.

16…hxg6??

A tremendous blunder. Black had to retake with the f pawn, the text allows a forced mate in two.

Here we see that factor which is beyond our ability to control coming into play – the mistake. This was mentioned in the introduction and it makes an appearance time after time.

This is, however, tremendously convenient for the sake of our example.

17.Qh6+ Kg8 18.Qh8 #.

Had Black played the correct move – 16…fxg6, White is still better. The following is a possible example of how play may have continued:

17.Qh6+ Kg8 18.g4 Rfe8 19.f4 Qc7 20.e5 Bd5 21.Rh3 dxe5 22.fxe5 Nd7 23.Qxh7+ Kf8 24.Qxg6 Bxa2+ 25.Nxa2 e6 26.Rh7 Nf6 27.Qh6+ Kg8 28.Rh8+ Kf7 29.Qxf6# 1-0

White's plan in the opening and middlegame was simple, and effective:

create a stable pawn base in the centre, prepare to exchange off Black's defensive bishop on g7, create the conditions for a kingside pawn storm, castle on the opposite side to Black and open the h file allowing a mating attack.

Moves one to seven saw White create the foundations for his coming attack, and here we see the notional plan forming - attack on the kingside. After taking measures to secure his king from Black's initial aggression White was able to put the various parts of his plan into action, first he exchanged off the bishop on g7, and then he used his kingside pawns to advance and exchange off a defensive pawn in front of Black's king, thus opening the h file. Black went wrong with 16…hxg6 instead of 16…fxg6, and White pounced. White is now target specific, and the combined power of the queen and rook lends him sufficient force to bring the game to a quick conclusion.

Another factor that helped White in his attack was the early castling of the Black king. Black gives the address of his king too early, he should have avoided this.

You might notice that White was in no great hurry to develop his kingside pieces, indeed, he never moved his knight on g1. The reason for this was that it wasn't needed. When we have opposite side castling situations every tempo is precious. These positions will favor the side that gets their attack in first, therefore, if a piece is not vital to the coming attack we don't need to develop it, and we are justified in leaving a piece, or pieces, fallow. Getting the attack underway is paramount, and in this instance developing a kingside piece is a secondary concern.

Game two: Girya. O Bodnaruka. A St Petersburg 2017

1.d4 Nf6 2.Bf4 g6

Black hoists the fianchetto flag.

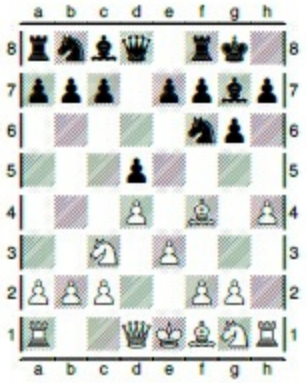
3.Nc3 d5 4.e3 Bg7 5.h4

White needs no encouragement to commence hostilities. Black's g pawn

is jutting out and is a ready made target for the advancing White h pawn. White seeks to open the h file and use it as a highway to the Black king.

5…0–0?!

See diagram 1.8.



1.8 W

Perhaps a bit too early. Probably best is 5…h5, preventing the advance of White's h pawn.

6.h5 Nxh5 7.Rxh5 gxh5 8.Qxh5

1.9 B

At the cost of the exchange White has reduced Black's redoubt, stripping it of a vital defender, the knight on f6, and one of Black's foot soldiers has been ripped away from the king's defense. Furthermore, White has the makings of a strong attack based on playing Bd3, Nf3, 0-0-0 and Rh1.

Black’s fortress is already damaged goods.

8…f5

Black is complicit in his own downfall. He realizes that White is going to mobilize his bishop on the b1 – h7 diagonal, and minus the pawn on g6 White’s bishop would have an open highway to the h7 pawn, so Black advances his f pawn to mount a roadblock on the b1 – h7 diagonal. There is sound reasoning behind this move, but advancing the f pawn uncovers his king on the a2 – f7 diagonal, this is another weakening move for the Black king as one of his closest defenders goes A.W.O.L., absent without leave. Black has made a concession, but this was provoked by White’s earlier aggression.

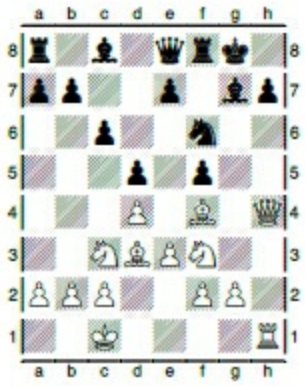
9.Nf3

White could have played 9.Qh2, winning the c7 pawn, if Black pushes the c pawn out of danger then White picks up the knight on b8, but this is more of a distraction to White than an advantage, White wants to get on with his kingside attack.

9...c6 10.Bd3 Nd7 11.0–0–0 Nf6

Black re-establishes a vital defender, life isn’t too bad for the Black king, but White is far from spent, he can bring more pressure to bear on the Black king.

12.Qh4 Qe8 13.Rh1



1.10 B

White has a number of plans here. He can try to force open the b1 – h7 diagonal for his bishop by advancing the g pawn to g4, using the g pawn as a lever to prise away the Black pawn on f5, thus opening the b1 – h7 diagonal, or he can intensify the pressure against the h7 pawn with Ng5, he can play Ne5, centralizing the knight and taking aim at vulnerable squares in Black's camp – f7 and g6, or he can bring the c3 knight into the game via e2 and g3. There's a lot for Black to think about.

13…h5

Black tries to reinforce the g4 square, this is aimed at preventing White's attempt to open the b1 – h7 diagonal by pushing his g pawn, but Black can only delay this he can't prevent it, as White has f3 preparing g4. White can also play Ne5 which supports the advance of the g pawn. Black has advanced another pawn from the protective cover of his king, a further concession.

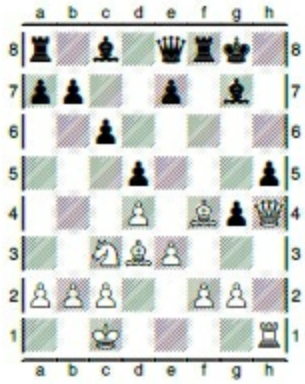
Advancing the h pawn has sound reasoning to support it, but Black's defensive pawns are drawn out, creating a vacuum around his king and a gapping chasm of empty undefended space behind the advanced pawns, and White can exploit this void.

14.Ne5 Ng4?

I can't help but feel that this is the downfall for the Black king. In an attempt to hold back White's attack Black has been weakening the defences of his king, now he marches yet another defender away from the king's side.

15.Nxg4 fxg4

This unleashes White's bishop on the b1 – h7 diagonal, but this is probably the least of two evils as 15…hxg4 opens the h file for White's queen and rook. Black's king is looking very fragile. The mighty monarch has been abandoned by its defenders and his foot soldiers have wondered off on a campaign to nowhere.



1.11 W

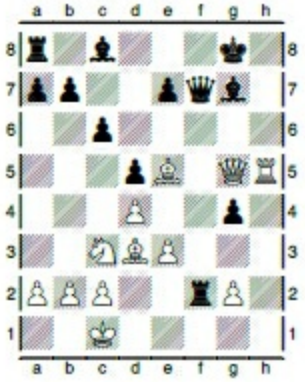
16.Qg5

Black would be delighted if White were to take the pawn on h5 and allow an exchange of queens, but White has no intention of watering down his attack. Black's pawn on h5 is now under attack from the rook and the queen, and on g5 the White queen can prevent Black from playing...Bf5, presenting a challenge to White's powerful bishop on d3.

16...Rf6

This looks desperate. Black might be hoping to swing the rook over to the h file to prop up the h5 pawn or he might have in mind Qf7, enabling Bf5. Black needs two moves in one go.

17.Be5 Qf7 18.Rxh5 Rxf2



1.12 W

A desperate counterattack by Black, but it’s too late; with the c8 bishop and the rook on a8 still on their original squares Black is practically two pieces down, and White’s army stands at the gate.

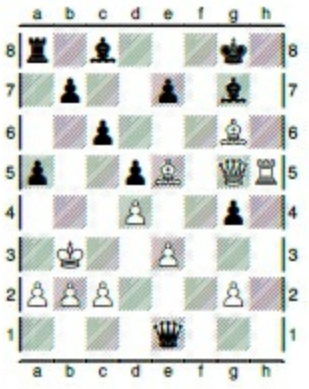
19.Bg6 Rf1+ 20.Nd1 Rxd1+ 21.Kxd1 Qf1+

Black will soon run out of checks.

22.Kd2 Qf2+ 23.Kc3 Qe1+ 24.Kb3 a5

Too slow, but what is Black to do? His queen is now out of play, and he can’t get her back to the kingside where she is desperately needed; and meanwhile, there is a baying mob of White pieces assembled against Black’s king.

See diagram 1.13.



1.13 W

The loyal prelate has remained by the king’s side throughout, but alas not even God can save this king.

25.Bh7+

This leads to a forced mate, but 25.Rh8+ was one move quicker: 25.Rh8+ Bxh8 26.Bh5+ Kf8 *(26...Kh7 27.Qg6#)* 27.Qh6+ Bg7 28.Qxg7#.

The rest of the game is given below.

25...Kf7 26.Qg6+ Kf8 27.Bxg7#.

White had two phases in this game.

The initial phase was when he lashed out with 5.h4 and succeeded in opening the h file with an exchange sacrifice.

Here is the position after 8.Qxh5

See diagram 1.14.

1.14 B

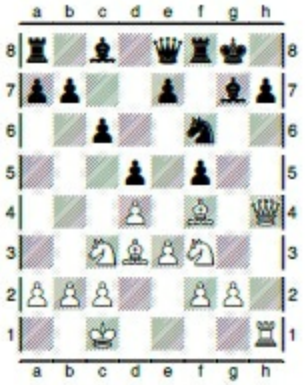
The first part of White’s plan has been a success, he has opened the h file.

Open lines are the avenues of attack.

White has inflicted damage on Black’s castled position. The g pawn is absent, this leaves the Black king weakened and potentially exposed to a head on attack via the g file, the defensive knight on f6 has been removed, and White can easily exchange off the g7 bishop.

Having achieved his initial aims White draws breath to get his king to safety and to assemble his remaining forces.

By move thirteen White has castled and gathered his strength for the coming assault on Black’s king, the second wave of attack commences.



1.15 B

On moves thirteen and fourteen Black makes further defensive errors with 13…h5 and 14…Ng4?

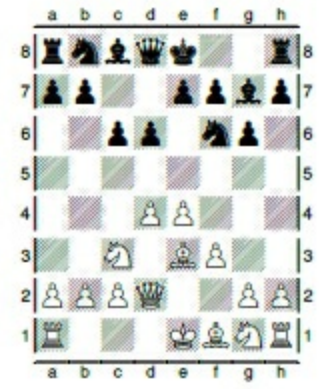
1.16 W

On move sixteen White's pieces start to infiltrate behind Black's advanced kingside pawns. The h5 pawn will soon fall.

Move eighteen sees Black embarking on an ill-fated counterattack that owes more to fantasy than reason. With this expedition Black fatally dilutes his defences, and Black's king falls prey to White's invading army.

Game three: Lupkowski. E Sliwerski. R Polanica Zdroj 2004

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.f3 Bg7 5.Be3 c6 6.Qd2



1.17 B

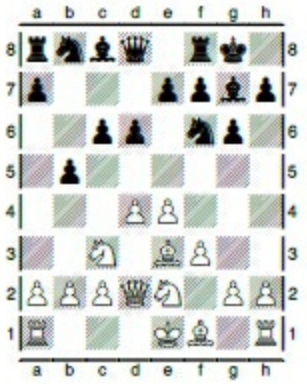
White has all the building blocks in place. He is ready to exchange bishops on g7, he is poised for a pawn storm on the kingside, and he is set to

castle long.

6…b5

Black lashes out on the queenside, hoping White will castle on that side of the board.

7.Nge2 0–0



1.18 W

Black should try to delay this move.

8.g4

Now that Black has posted the address of his king White sends his kingside troops forward to embrace the Black monarch.

8…a5

Black is really hoping that White will castle long.

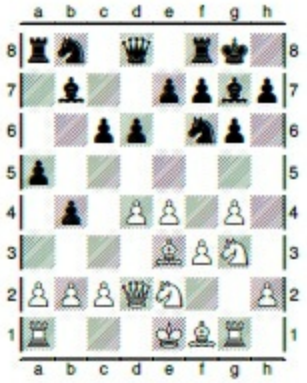
9.Ng3

White brings a piece to the kingside, and makes room for the c3 knight to come to e2. White certainly has no intention of surrendering his king to the growing hostility of Black's queenside ambitions.

9…b4

Black maintains his press on the queenside, but absent the White king this activity is lacking a target and, therefore, it is also lacking in purpose.

10.Nce2 Bb7 11.Rg1



1.19 B

It seems odd to remove the rook from the h file. White may feel that his rook could be left exposed to Black's bishop on b7, but it's unlikely that Black could force open the h1 – a8 diagonal for his b7 bishop. More natural here would be to push the h pawn with the intention of opening the h file. However, the rook is well placed in the g file.

11…Qc7 12.Bh6

The typical ploy to exchange the defensive bishop.

12…c5

Black must be very disappointed that White has not been obliging enough to fall in with his plans and castle on the queenside, so he seeks conflict in the centre. Black must generate play in some area of the board.

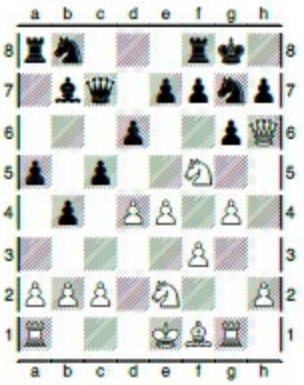
13.Nf5!

A good move.

13…Ne8

Of course Black can’t take the knight: 13...gxf5 14.gxf5 Nh5 15.Bxg7 Nxg7 16.Qg5 Black is lost.

Back to the game: 14.Bxg7 Nxg7 15.Qh6



1.20 B

White threatens mate on g7.

15…Nxf5?

Black had to keep the kingside closed, 15…Ne8 was preferable, taking the f5 knight allows an opening of the g file for White’s rook, it’s suicide for Black.

16.gxf5 d5

Black continues his search for conflict in the centre.

17.Nf4 f6?

This opens a massive wound on e6 allowing White 18.Ne6, winning on the spot. White threatens mate on g7, and attacks the Black queen on c7. If Black defends against the mate threat with 18…Rf7 he drops the queen.

Alternatively White has a forced mate starting with 18.Nxg6.

However, for reasons best known to himself, White opted for 18.Nh5. This was probably an oversight in time trouble.

Here is what could have happened had White played 18.Nxg6:

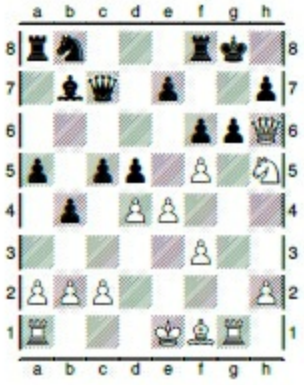
White threatens mate with 19.Qxf8#.

And if Black takes the knight on g6 White has mate in two: 18…hxg6 19.Qxg6+ Kh8 20.Qg7#. 18…Rf7, moving the rook from harm's way makes sense, but White has mate in two: 19.Ne5+, discovered check from the rook on g1, 19…Kh8 20.Nxf7#. The last sensible try is 18…Nc6, this discovers a defense for the f8 rook from its colleague on a8, but this too is doomed, 19.Ne5+ Kh8 20.Qg7#.

Back to the game:

18.Nh5

White's overlooked two easy wins. Black got away with it twice.



1.21 B

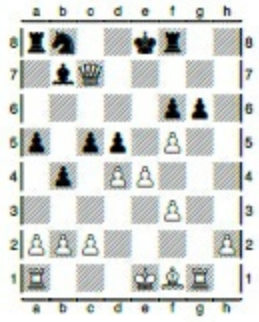
White threatens mate on g7.

Black plays 18…Kf7 and resigns.

19.Nxf6 is very strong for White.

With the following possibilities:

19… exf6 (19...Kxf6! 20.Qxf8#; 19...Rh8) 20.Qxh7+ Ke8 21.Qxc7



21...Nd7 22.Qxb7 Rb8 23.Qxd5 g5 24.dxc5 Rf7 25.0–0–0 a4 26.Bc4 Rg7 27.Qc6 a3 1–0

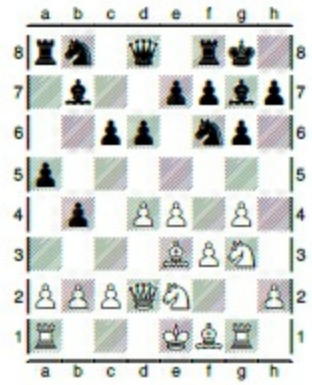
Again we see that White had invested wisely in the opening moves. By move six White has put his key bricks in place for an assault on the kingside. White has a comfortable centre, the queen and bishop battery are ready to exchange off Black's bishop on g7, and he has the pawn on f3, with its

attendant benefits, and a potential pawn storm on the kingside, see the diagram below.

1.22 B

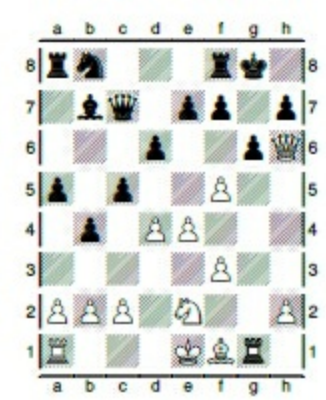
By move eleven White has assembled his forces in the kingside and is ready to put his plan into action. In this instance White has placed his rook in the g file, but he still has the option of advancing his h pawn with the idea of opening the h file.

See diagram 1.23.



1.23 B

By move sixteen White has forced Black into making a concession of opening the g file. White's queen and rook have good open lines, and he is ready to activate the knight.



1.24 B

On move seventeen Black makes the terrible mistake of 17…f6? White fails to take advantage with 18.Ne6, and skins the cat the hard way with 18.Nh5, and after 18…Kf7 Black's kingside defenses are wide open, he has no effective defense to 19.Nxf6.

Game four: Lenier. J Pooley. M Hastings 2010

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.Be3

1.25 B

White prepares a reception committee in anticipation of Black deploying

his bishop to g7. However, I think that 4.f3 was a better move. Playing the bishop to e3 could be premature as Black could play 4…Ng4, hitting the e3 bishop. I think White is gambling here that Black will obey basic principles and not move the same piece (the knight on f6) twice.

4…c6

White got away with one here, there is nothing wrong with 4…Ng4. Sure, Black has moved the same piece twice in the opening, but White wont want to see his dark-squared bishop being exchanged off for Black's knight, so by the same token White will most likely move his bishop out of harm's way with 5.Bd2, and then Black has 5…e5. Black's position is fine. White's approach was lacking in accuracy.

5.Qd2 Bg7

5…Ng4 was still worth playing.

6.0–0–0 Nbd7 7.Bh6 0–0 8.h4

See diagram 1.26.

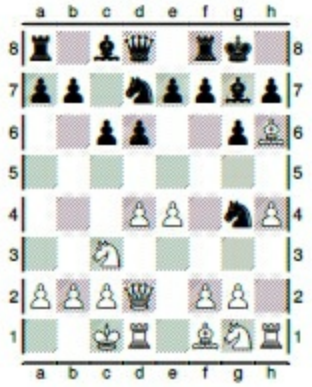
1.26 B

White pursues his plan with the maximum economy, all be it thanks to Black refraining from the disruptive 4…Ng4 idea.

White has established a comfortable centre, castled on the opposite flank, prepared to exchange off the defensive bishop on g7 and now sets about

opening the h file. Black should seek counter-play on the queenside without delay.

8…Ng4?



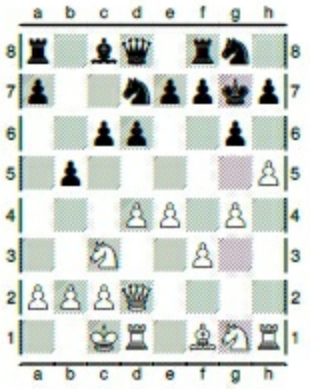
1.27 W

It's a total waste of time playing this move now. Black loses vital time, 8…b5 or 8... Qa5 was called for. White's attack has momentum, whereas Black has not even begun!

9.Bxg7 Kxg7 10.f3 Ngf6 11.h5 Ng8?

Far too defensive minded. Black's idea is to cover the invasion square – h6 by re-deploying the knight to g8, but he urgently needs to mount counter pressure against White on the queenside, an interesting defensive try by Black was 11…Rh8, when any opening of the h file would have to be prepared by White in light of his rook on h1 being undefended.

12.g4 b5



1.28 W

Better late than never.

13.e5

Strange that White should look to broaden the conflict by playing in the centre, but this may be aimed at preventing Black playing the d7 knight to f6; true, 13.g5 would accomplish this, but White wants a free hand to advance or exchange his g pawn.

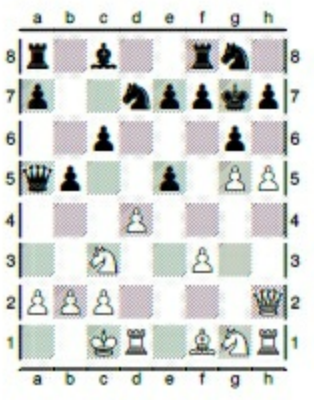
13…Qa5

It is best for Black to ignore the centre and get on with active play against the White king.

14.g5 dxe5

Totally unnecessary, Black might have been concerned with a possible pawn sac by White advancing to e6, but to stop this he would then have to play …e6 himself. In opposite castled positions you don't have the time for such things. Black could have hit the White knight with 14…b4, at least he gives White something to think about, especially as the c3 knight holds the a2 pawn. Black might also have attempted to facilitate an emergency exit for his king with say 14…Re8 or Rd8, in which case the Black king may find a safe refuge on either f8 or by travelling to e8.

15.Qh2



1.29 B

White ramps it up. Opening the h file looks very promising for him.

15...h6?

A desperate bid to keep lines closed.

16.gxh6+ Kh7

As Black's pawn wall is eroded he hopes to find shelter for his king by using White's pawn as a shield.

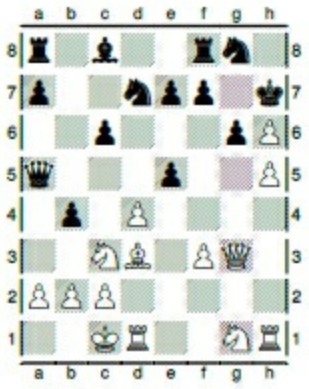
17.Bd3

Only now, when the bishop has a purpose, does White bring this piece into the game. On d3 the bishop bears down on the Black king.

17…b4

Too little too late. Had this come one or two moves earlier it may have made a difference. Black now pays the price for the time he wasted with 8… Ng4, and 11…Ng8.

18.Qg3



1.30 B

Checkmate looms for the Black king.

18…e4

Black's defense becomes increasingly desperate as he flays around trying to close the highways to his king, but he can only delay the inevitable.

Accepting the sacrificial goat with 18…bxc3? cedes mate in three:

19.hxg6+ fxg6 20.Qxg6+ Kh8 21.Qh7# or Qg7#. The flashy way would be the queen sac: 19.Qxg6+ fxg6 20.hxg6+ Kh8 21.g7#.

Back to the game:

19.Bxe4

White reopens the line for his bishop.

19…Kh8 20.hxg6 f5

Black succeeds in locking White's dangerous bishop out of the game, but White has a crush with his two connected passed pawns.

21.g7+

Black can resign.

21…Kh7 22.gxf8 =N+

A cute way of finishing things off, Black can't stop Qg7#. 1–0.

Black made a few errors here. He failed to play the disruptive 4…Ng4, which could have allowed him get e5 in, and the game may well have gone differently. Moving the knight to g4 on move eight was a costly waste of time, and moving the knight back to g8 on move eleven also cost Black valuable time. Consequently Black's counterattack against White's king came too late and lacked urgency. Black had no worthwhile riposte to White's advancing foot soldiers on the kingside. He could not keep the position closed, and ultimately his own friendly shield wall was replaced by White's advancing army of assassins.

Here was another instance when White left the g1 knight fallow, not using it in the whole game, it just wasn't needed.

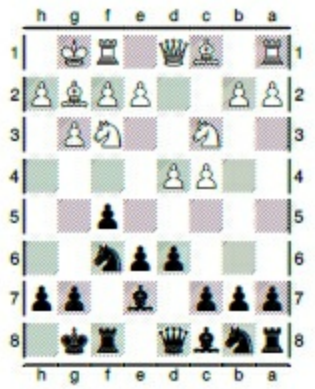
We can see then that a king is not always safe in a castled position, even if his walls are built of concrete and steel, there is nothing made by man that cannot be destroyed by man.

We now have an attacking technique for undermining even the strongest of defences. The plan is straightforward. Construct a comfortable centre, deploy a queen and bishop battery to exchange off the fianchettoed bishop, castle on the opposite side, and storm the opponent's castled position with an advance of pawns.

White also uses the fianchetto model of castling, and anything that White can do, Black can do too.

Game five: Golubovic. B Moser. E Oberwart 2001

1.d4 f5 2.g3 Nf6 3.Bg2 e6 4.Nf3 Be7 5.c4 d6 6.Nc3 0–0 7.0–0

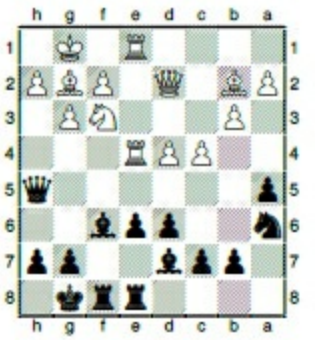


1.31 B

White’s king is securely entrenched.
7…Qe8

Black’s queen is set on a course for the kingside.

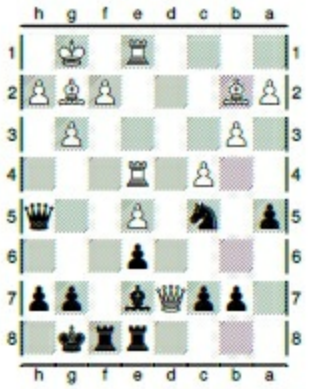
8.b3 a5 9.Bb2 Na6 10.Re1 Qh5 11.e4 fxe4 12.Nxe4 Nxe4 13.Rxe4 Bf6 14.Qd2 Bd7 15.Rae1 Rae8



1.32 W

The position is approximately equal, however, White sees a tactical means of winning a pawn, but his idea is lacking in accuracy.

16.Ne5? dxe5 17.dxe5 Be7 18.Qxd7 Nc5



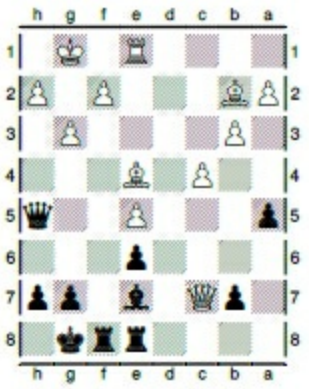
1.33 W

White appears to have overlooked the fork against his rook and queen; if he did see it then perhaps he thought he could take the pawn on e6 with check and side step the fork, but to his horror he realized that the e6 pawn is held by the all seeing knight on c5. So White wins a pawn but at the expense of conceding the exchange, an un-forced error.

19.Qxc7

Perhaps White can cheer himself up by winning a second pawn. I don't think White has sufficient compensation for the exchange, but if he can pick up three pawns then being down the exchange is justified.

19…Nxe4 20.Bxe4



1.34 B

White is poised to win the b7 pawn, after which he would be in possession of a healthy three to one majority on the queenside, but all is not

well in White's camp. There are tell-tail indicators of looseness. There is no mutual co-operation between White's pieces. White's king looks lonely. The bishop needs to come back to g2. The rook would be better placed on f1, especially in view of Black's rook operating un-opposed in the f file.

Black sets about exploiting these failings in White's position.

20…Bb4 21.Rb1

The rook looks far more natural on f1, but this allows 21…Qe2, forking White's bishops; but not to worry, after 22.Bg2 and 23.Rf1 White should be ok, and he stands a good chance of grabbing a pawn on the queenside.

But it is Black to move, and he has found a huge chink in White's armor.

1.35 B

21…Rxf2!!

A fantastic shot.

When it's your turn to move ask yourself what you can sacrifice.

A good question for the attack minded player.

Black threatens mate with 22…Qxh2#.

White must find a defense.

22.Kxf2 Qxh2+ 23.Ke3

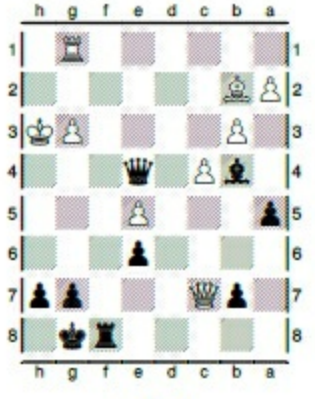
1.36 B

White’s king has been evicted. His former residence, that not too long ago was as solid as rock, has been destroyed. The White king is forced out into the open to be hunted and prosecuted like a common vagabond.

Interposing with the bishop: 23.Bg2, would not have helped as the king is subject to a check on the f file from Black’s rook and is soon devoured in a feeding frenzy by Black’s queen, rook and bishop: 23.Bg2 Rf8+ 24.Ke3 Qxg3+ 25.Ke2 (25.Kd4 Qf2+ 26.Kd3 Qd2+ 27.Ke4 Rf4#) Qxg2+ 26.Ke3 Qd2+ 27.Ke4 Rf4#.

Back to the game:

23…Qd2+ 24.Kf3 Rf8+ 25.Kg4 Qe2+ 26.Kh3 Qxe4 27.Rg1



1.37 B

White brings his rook to the kingside in a desperate bid to stave off the checks, and cover the king.

27…Qf5+ 28.g4

This only seems to make matters worse for White, but alternatives were no better.

28.Kh2, seems reasonable, with the idea of meeting 28…Qf2+, with 29.Rg2, and the rook defends the bishop on b2, that would otherwise fall to the Black queen, but Black has 28…Qh5+, forcing the king to the g file - 29.Kg2 and 29…Qe2+, picks up the b2 bishop, but Black has more than this: 30.Kh3 (30.Kh1 leads to mate, with considerable analysis, run it through Fritz) 30…Rf2, threatening mate with 31…Qh5#, 31.Qb8+ Bf8 32.g4 Qe3+ 33.Rg3 Qh6#. There are lots of possible alternatives but all lines are fatal for the White King.

Back to the game:

28…Qf3+ 29.Kh2

29.Kh4 is mate in four: 29…g5+ 30.Kxg5 Qf4+ 31.Kh5 Qh2+ 32.Kg5 Bd2#.

Back to the game:

29…Bd2

Threatening 30…Bf4#.

30.Bc1

Threat met, for now.

30…Qf2+ 31.Rg2 Qh4+ 32.Kg1

1.38 B

Black could take the bishop on c1, or he could play a queen check on e1, but instead Black finishes with a brilliant stroke:

32… Rf1+!!

Fantastic! A second rook sac!

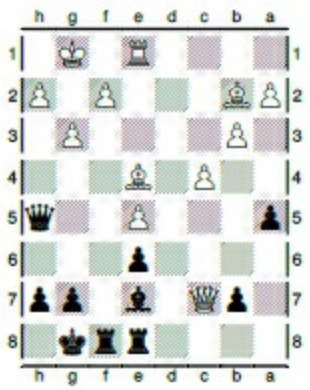
This brings us back to that question: When it is my move what can I sacrifice?

33.Kxf1 Qe1# 0–1

A brilliant game by Black.

White's position was sound until he embarked on the wayward idea of winning a pawn with 16.Ne5?, this cost White the exchange, and the two pawns he picked up in return did not provide adequate compensation.

After 20.Bxe4, White's pieces are spread out and lacking proper harmony.



1.39 B

White's queen is far removed from any of the other pieces, she's doing her own thing with no thought of tying up with her colleagues. The bishop on e4 needs to come back home to g2, the bishop on b2 holds promise, but is acting in isolation, the rook on e1 is well centralised, but un-defended, this is a common thread for all of White's pieces. White could win another pawn on b7, but he needs to coordinate his pieces.

Black's pieces, on the other hand, are effectively posted, especially his rooks, and he is well placed to expose the fractured nature of White's unrelated rag-tag mob.

From the diagramed position, 1.39, Black threatens the rook on e1, with 20…Bb4, forcing White to play his rook to b1, far away from the defense of the White king, and then the fun begins with 21…Rxf2!!

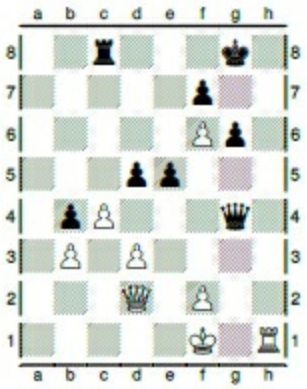
A move such as this requires tremendous tactical insight, vision and courage. The outcome was not certain, there were many ways that the game could have gone with any number of different variations, but once the White king was un-housed its fate was more or less determined, prognosis – fatal! ***An exposed king is a half dead king.***

When a player decides to fianchetto his bishop it's important, in most cases, to maintain the fianchettoed bishop in place, typically located on g7 and g2; that's not to say that the bishop must never leave the king's side, sometimes this is justified, but to exchange off the fianchettoed bishop can be very costly indeed, especially when the opposing side still has a bishop of the same colour as the fianchetto bishop. This results in an empty fianchetto, and

a vacuum can arise on the colour sequence of the exchanged bishop, this is very dangerous to the defender.

See below for some examples of this theme.

Example one: S.E A. N. Other Internet 2020



1.40 W

The White pawn on f6 forms a wedge on g7; because of this Black's king stands with a knife to his throat. White immediately exploits the situation.

1.Rh8+! Kxh8, forced, 2.Qh6+ Kg8 3.Qg7#.

Example two: S.E O'gorman. B Rhyl 2005

1.41 W

Black may be feeling safe. He is, after all, attacking White's queen, but

Black's safety is no more than an illusion. Black's missing bishop on g7 leaves serious weaknesses on the dark squares around his king. The bishop's absence is punished.

1.Rxh7!

White threatens 2.Rh8#, Black must stop this, and taking the White queen does not meet the threat.

1…Bxh7

And now White steps in on the weakened dark squares.

2.Qh6

Black can't stop the mate on g7.

Example three: S.E A. N. Other Internet 2019

142 W

White has a simple mate with 1.Qe5+, Black can delay mate by one move with

1…f6

But:

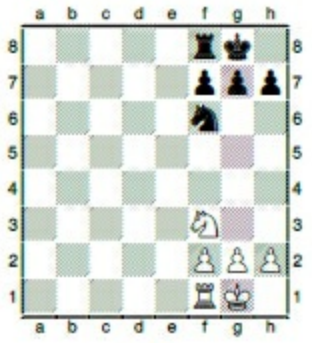
2.Qxf6+ Kg8 3.Qg7#.

Part B: Attacking the castled king minus the fianchetto

Having viewed the fianchetto method of castling, and perhaps finding it somewhat wanting, you might think that omitting the fianchetto may be a better option. In this set-up there is no pawn jutting out in the g file for the attacker to latch onto, so the castled king is safer, isn't it?

Well, sometimes it is, and on other occasions it's just as fraught with dangers as the pervious model.

Let's consider what it is that we are discussing:



2.1

Both sides have castled their kings into a high security area. The kings are very well defended by a shield wall of pawns, and each king is attended by loyal bodyguards – the knight and rook. These two pieces lend extra defense to the king's house by shoring up the f and h pawns. Both kings look sound. In this model there are no apparent weaknesses, surely the king must be safe from attack.

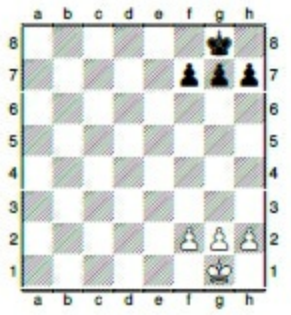
As an attacker we must find a means of penetrating this defence.

So how do we do that?

There are methods of attack when king's are castled on the same flank,

but certain conditions have to be in place.

The kingside consists of three files: the f file, the g file and the h file, see diagram 2.2, on the next page.



2.2

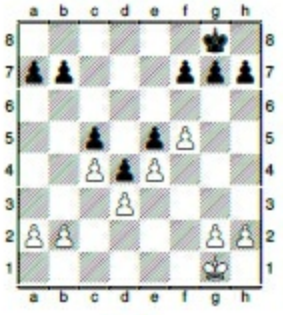
These three files constitute a narrow front, and it's on this slender terrain that we will seek battle.

The techniques that we will examine are:

1, Attack the king with pieces.

2, Attack the king with a pawn storm, supported by pieces.

However, before embarking upon an assault on the flank, we must first make sure that our centre is secure. If our centre is loose our opponent will have a ready-made counterattack against us in this sector, and our flank attack will most likely collapse. Obviously we want to avoid this, and the best means of doing so is to seal the centre with pawns before we embark upon any flank activity. See below for some examples of a sealed centre.



2.3

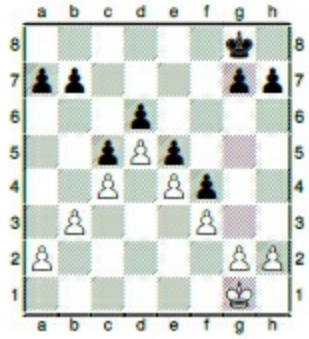
The immediate centre consists of e4, d4, d5 and e5. If these squares are occupied with pawns that are blocked then no activity can take place in the immediate centre. This provides us with a stable platform for a flank attack.

With our centre secure we know that no counterattack will be forth coming in this sector of the board that might otherwise offset our attack on the flank.

Further examples of this theme can be seen below:

2.4

The centre is sealed. Activity may ***only*** take place on the flanks.



2.5

The centre is sealed. Activity can ***only*** take place on the flanks.

If the centre is not sealed then a flank attack may still succeed providing the attack is pressed home with an urgency that doesn't permit the defender the time to mount a counter in the centre.

But as a rule of thumb, before embarking upon an attack on a flank we

must have a sealed or solid centre.

This is a condition of any successful attack on the flank.

In order for any attack against the castled king with pieces to take place we must first have the means to feed our pieces into the narrow corridor that makes up the kingside.

The road to successful attacks is paved with open lines and exposed kings.

Remember our mantras:

Open lines are the avenues of attack.

An exposed king is a half dead king.

These are the two prime planks in our platform for a successful attack; but just how far should we go in our efforts to expose our opponent's king? How much of our own resources are we prepared to sacrifice on this particular altar?

See the following two games for an example of this theme.

Game one: Tseitlin. M Liesmann. K Kleve 1999

1.Nf3 c5 2.c3 d5 3.d4 e6 4.Bf4 Nc6 5.e3 Nf6 6.Nbd2 Be7 7.Bd3 0–0 8.0–0

2.6 B

White is playing the London System, a very popular opening. White sets up a pawn salient in the centre on d4, and develops his dark-squared bishop (the London bishop) outside the pawn chain. White fits his other minor pieces comfortably within the pawn formation that he has created. Note how White's bishop on d3 and his knight on d2 combine to control the e4 square, thus ensuring that Black's knight on f6 cannot gain entry to this central square without suffering the loss of a pawn. White gains no great advantage in the initial stage of the game, but he has a solid platform.

8…b6 9.Ne5

2.7 B

At this point White can claim to have a small advantage.

The knight on e5 is a towering piece.

On e5 the knight looks at c6, d7, f7 and g6. A fearsome character, and Black knows he cannot take the knight on e5 without White re-capturing on e5 with the d pawn and ousting his defensive knight from its post on f6.

A further point of significance is realized by White moving his knight to e5 – he has opened the d1 – h5 diagonal for his queen. White can now feed his queen into the narrow kingside front.

9…Bb7 10.Qf3

The queen makes an appearance in the kingside, and has access to both the g and h files. On either one of these files the queen will be staring at the opposing king.

10…Rc8 11.Rad1 Nb8 12.Rfe1

White centralizes his rooks in the event of the centre opening up.

12…Nbd7 13.Qh3

See diagram 2.8, on the next page.

2.8 B

White's queen and bishop combine to hit the h7 pawn. White's bishop on f4 is also active, he has a dominant knight on e5, and his knight on d2 may make an appearance on f3 when it would have access to g5, placing it close to the Black king; and White may also consider advancing the g pawn up the board to oust the f6 knight. White's position hums with potential. A strong

hint of attack in the kingside is in the air, but White's centre is not secure.

Black could exchange with a timely …cxd4, however, this is of no great consequence as White can recapture on d4 with his e pawn, and this would open the e file for White's rook on e1. Black would be reluctant to allow White's rook such a good view of proceedings, and opening the c file for his own rook on c8 holds little to no promise.

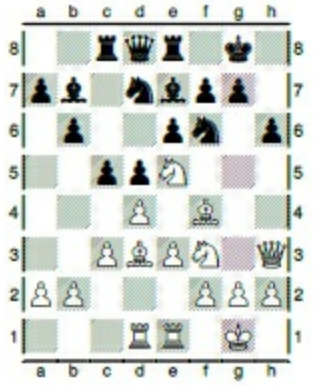
13…Re8

Black reacts to White's looming initiative by getting ready to place his d7 knight on f8. On this square the knight will offer much needed protection to the h7 pawn. It is said that you can't lose if you have a knight on f8, that may be the case, but in order to put this defense in place Black has removed the rook from the defense of the f7 pawn, thus weakening his king's position. White seeks to exploit this.

14.Ndf3

In the event that Black pursues his plan of putting his knight on f8 then White will play his knight to g5 when both knights will be attacking the f7 pawn. Black wants to avoid this so he plays a prophylatic move to prevent White's knight access to g5.

14…h6



2.9 W

This is tempting fate.

15.Bxh6!

White smells blood and sets about stripping the Black king of its defensive shield wall.

15…gxh6 16.Qg3+

This is much better than 16.Qxh6, back to the game:

16…Kf8

(16…Kh8? 17.Nxf7#.)

17.Nxf7! Kxf7 18.Qg6+ Kf8 19.Qxh6+ Kg8

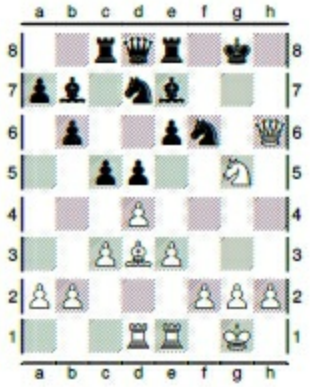
2.10 W

White has sacrificed two pieces, but in return for this he has Black's king at his mercy.

White has sufficient resources at hand to dispatch Black's king. He has the combined might of queen, bishop and knight. Black has a couple of defenders close to his king, the knight on f6 and the knight on d7. The d7 knight can come to f8, alternatively the bishop on e7 could go to f8 and defend the dark squares, but Black may need f8 as a flight square for his king. Black's big problem here is the lack of any defense on the light squares around his king, he has no means of combating White's light-squared bishop. Black's counter part, his own light-squared bishop, is light years away on the

queenside, it would take a minimum of eight moves to get the b7 bishop over to the kingside.

20.Ng5



2.11 B

This is the end for Black, White has a forced mate.

White is now target specific. He has the threat of 21.Bh7+, If Black plays 21…Nxh7 then 22.Qxh7+, leads to a quick mate (22...Kf8 23.Qf7#.) and 21…Kh8, trying to hide behind the h7 bishop, is of no use as the knight hops into f7 with mate.

Back to the game:

20...Nf8

Black parachutes another defender in to hold the light square – h7, but alas to no avail.

21.Bg6

White has a new target: f7, the threat is 22.Bf7#, Black's king and knights can hold h7, but not f7 as well.

21…N8h7

Black desperately makes a shelter for his king in the hope that his majesty

can find refuge behind the h7 knight on h8, but on h7 the knight is in the way of a buzz saw, and cannot be held, and if the knight falls then the king follows.

22.Bxh7+ Nxh7

Seeking refuge on h8 is no good - 22...Kh8 23.Nf7#.

Back to the game:

23.Qxh7+ Kf8 24.Nxe6#

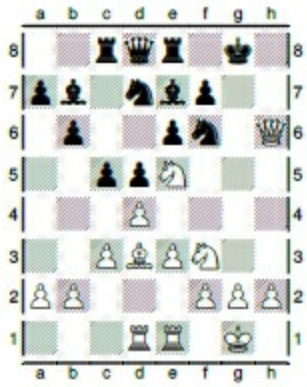
An exposed king is a half dead king.

If we turn the clock back to the position after Black's fourteenth move – 14…h6, then we should be asking the question – how did White know that the sacrifice of 15.Bxh6 would work?

2.12 W

Initially it looks like White is sacking his bishop for two pawns with 15.Bxh6 gxh6 and 16.Qxh6

See diagram 2.13, on the next page.



2.13 B

It’s not easy to see how White can continue the attack from here. True, White has inflicted damage on Black’s king, leaving it exposed and vulnerable, but it’s difficult to see how White can make further progress.

In prosecuting this attack White had to use accurate calculation and visualisation skills. The continuation of 16.Qxh6, could blow up in White’s face, but I would wager that White viewed it. He would also have looked at 16.Qg3+, as a continuation. This line has the benefit of being forcing, and it contains a trap for the unwary, as 16…Kh8 allows 17.Nxf7#.

White calculated this. He saw it in his mind’s eye, but still, the question has to asked how can White build on this?

Let’s look at the position after 16…Kf8:

2.14 W

Again, it’s far from easy to see how White might capitalize on this position.

But now comes the thunderbolt – 17.Nxf7!

Without this second sacrifice White’s attack is beached.

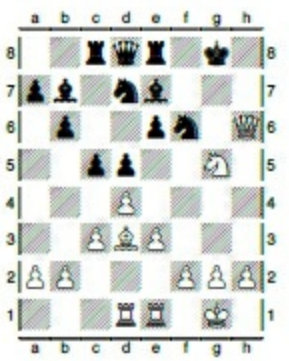
White must have calculated this prior to playing 15.Bxh6.

Black is not forced to accept the second sacrifice, but he may as well take it, so let’s look at the position after Black accepts the knight sac on f7.

2.15 W

Black’s king is woefully exposed, remember our adage: ***an exposed king is a half dead king.*** White’s queen and bishop combine, allowing White’s queen to enter the heart of Black’s kingside. A further essential requirement is to capture the pawn on h6, as this allows White’s knight to enter the fray.

So White continues with 18.Qg6+, Black’s response is forced: 18…Kf8, and White captures the h6 pawn with check: 19.Qxh6+. Now that the knight’s entry is facilitated Black is lost, it doesn’t matter what Black does, from here on in his fate is sealed.



2.16 W

White has three pieces in the attack against a naked king. The king stands bereft of pawn cover, every one of the three pawns directly in front of the Black king is gone. The remaining pieces that are close to the Black king are not able to defend against White's assault. The Black king is dead.

So was this an accident? A case of serendipity? No! It was planned!

Prior to playing the bishop sac on move fifteen White had foreseen this likely outcome, returning to that position once again.

2.17 W

A further question to be asked is - did White calculate every single move? Including all the possible twists and turns, from 15.Bxh6 to the final blow of 24.Nxe6#.

I can't really answer that, but what I can say is that White used a number of skill sets: calculation, visualization and logic. We can teach ourselves these skills. We can build them up, but there was another factor at work here:

instinct, pure gut feeling. White possessed an intuitive feel for the attack. I can't say for certain that he did or didn't see every single move, some of his play may, therefore, have been speculative.

On move fifteen, when White made the bishop sac, the situation could be described as notional. A specific means of delivering checkmate was not clear until such a time as the knight made its appearance on g5 on move twenty, five moves after the bishop sac on h6.

Unfortunately, no book, including this one, can teach an intuitive feeling. This has to be developed with time and experience. The only advice that I can offer is to immerse yourself in attacks, play, play and play; stick at it, have faith, and it will come. Failed attacks and loses will also come, but that's all part of the learning curve, and dare I say it?, the fun.

Interestingly, prior to White's bishop sac on move fifteen, I ran the position past five chess engines and three of them didn't consider 15.Bxh6, as a candidate move. It's somewhat comforting to feel that the human mind is superior to the chip.

In summary it is worth mentioning that Black castled perhaps too early and he could have been more active by playing Bd6 at some point to challenge White's bishop on f4.

Black's plan to re-route the d7 knight to f8 may well have been at fault. In order to prevent White's planned 15.Ng5, and subsequent targeting of his f7 pawn Black played 14…h6, providing White with an ideal target. In hindsight Black would have done better to return his rook to f8 on move fourteen. These were Black's only mistakes.

You might have noticed that Black was never left in peace long enough to organise any meaningful counterattack in the centre.

Much as I am loath to dilute your attacking instincts I do, however, feel that a little piece of advice should be forthcoming at this point. In the game we have just viewed White sacrificed two pieces to get at his opponent's king. I wouldn't want to encourage you to start sacrificing pieces speculatively. Before sacrificing any piece you must have a very high degree

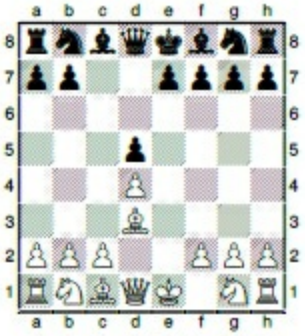
of confidence that the sacrifice/s will work.

When I first started playing chess competitively I was inspired by games such as the one we have just viewed, and I tried to emulate the same free flowing attacking style only to find two or three moves after sacrificing a piece that I had overlooked a vital defensive resource at my opponent's disposal, and I would emerge a piece down for two pawns with nothing to show for it, and eventually I would lose the game, so I made a little rule for myself that I have stuck to: never sacrifice a piece unless you are 110 percent sure that it works, this rule forced me into checking and double checking my calculations, not a bad frame of mind to get into.

Game two: S.E Forward. K Crewe 2004

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.Bd3

This is an exchange variation of the Caro Kann. White's 4.Bd3 was favored by Bobby Fischer.



2.18 B

4…Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6.h3?!

White wants to bring his bishop to f4, and decides to make an escape route available to the bishop should it be hit by a Black knight coming to h5.

6…e6 7.Nf3 Bd6 8.0–0 Qc7 9.Re1 h6 10.Nbd2 0–0 11.Nb3

2.19 B

The knight looks out of play here, but Fischer used to play this. The idea is to eventually re-route the knight via c1 to d3.

12.Bd2 Bb7 13.Qe2 Rfe8 14.Ne5 Nd7 15.f4 f6?!

See diagram 2.20.

2.20 W

A questionable move. In his efforts to evict the dominant knight from e5 Black weakens the light squares around his king, red flag time.

16.Rf1!?

White is happy to sac the knight. White could also have played 16.Qh5, with much the same result.

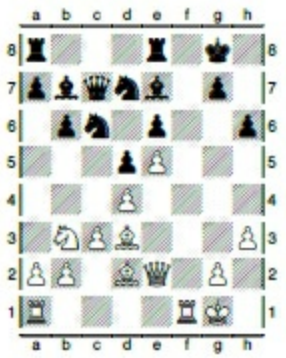
16...fxe5

Black accepts the offering. 17.fxe5

White's pawn on e5 seals the centre, conditions are ripe for a flank attack.

17…Be7

What has White got for his sacrificed piece? Fantastic open lines and a wealth of attacking opportunities.



2.21 W

Both bishops have great open lines to the Black king, as does the White queen, and the rook on f1.

In the same vein as the previous game, there is nothing specific here for White to take aim at, but given the plethora of open lines for so many pieces White scents an attack. This could be called speculation rich, and specifics poor. White's sac is intuitive.

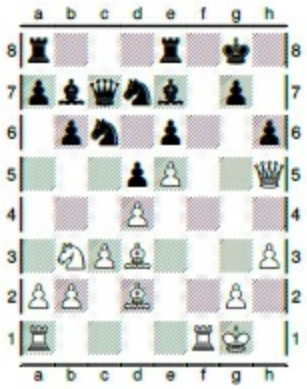
In fact there is a hint of a question mark hanging over White's sacrifice, as engines recommend that instead of moving the bishop out of harm's way with 17…Be7, that Black should give back the materiel with either knight taking on e5, and Black emerges a pawn up, and is slightly better:

17…Ndxe5 18.dxe5 Nxe5

See the next diagram.

This possibility was overlooked, back to the game:

18.Qh5



2.22 B

White's immediate threat is 19.Qg6 with a coming mate on h7, or just as good is 19.Qf7+ Kh8 20.Bxh6 gxh6 21.Qh7#, back to the game:

18...Rf8

Black seeks a reduction in arms

18…Nf8 to shore up h7 doesn't quiet do it for Black: 19.Qf7+ Kh8 20.Bxh6 gxh6 (20…Bf6 21.Qxc7) 21.Rf6 threatening mate in two with 22.Rxh6+ Nh7 and 23.Qxh7#.

Back to the game:

19.Bxh6

2.23 B

White throws a second piece on the alter, and Black is all but lost.

19…Rxf1+

The option of 19…gxh6 is not so good: 20.Qg6+ Kh8 21.Qh7#.

Back to the game:

20.Rxf1 Rf8

This slows White down, but that's all. At least White cannot now play 21.Qf7+, as he would lose his queen, but White is still very much in the driving seat.

21.Bf4

Intending 22.Bg6 and mate next move with Qh7#

21...Rf7?

21…Rf5, blocking the diagonal of White's bishop, was probably Black's last chance of staying in the game, but White is massively better**:** 22.Bxf5 exf5 23.e6, discovering an attack on the Black queen, 23…Qd8 24.Qf7+ Kh8 25.exd7 Qxd7 26.Re1 Bc8 27.Be5 Bh4 28.Qh5+ Kg8 29.Qxh4.

Back to the game:

22.Qh7+ 1–0

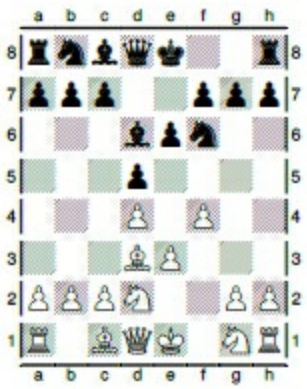
A robust and energetic game by White.

Both sides developed in a sensible fashion and conducted the early middlegame well until Black's mistake with 15...f6, and at this point White sacrificed his e5 knight and embarked on an intuitive attack which won the day.

Black was perhaps too obliging and seemed to fall in with White's plans. Black could have remained equal by giving back the materiel, as discussed in the notes to the game. However, once Black accepted the sacrifice and tried to hold on to his extra materiel White's attack was swift and overwhelming.

Game three: S.E A. N. OTHER Internet 2018

1.d4 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.Bd3 e6 4.Nd2 Bd6 5.f4



2.24 B

White plays a Stonewall.

White creates a strongpoint on e5 which he hopes to be able to use as an outpost for a knight.

5…0–0

Perhaps too early. Black could have tried 5…c5, attacking White's centre and perhaps 6…Nc6, most likely though Black will end up castling short.

6.c3

This was un-necessary; White is keen to cement his d4 pawn and complete the Stonewall configuration with pawns on c3, d4, e3 and f4, but White could have delayed 6.c3 in favor of a developing move – 6.Nf3. White only needs to play c3, if Black attacks his centre.

6…Nbd7 7.Ngf3 c5 8.Ne5

2.25 B

White succeeds in hoisting his knight to the centre, a theme witnessed in the two previous games, and likewise White opens an avenue for the queen to the kingside.

8…c4?

Black releases all the tension in the centre, this makes life easier for White, who is now free to get on with a flank attack on the kingside.

9.Bc2 Qc7?

It seems most unlikely that Black will profit from a queen and bishop battery on the g1 – b8 diagonal. Black's queen was better posted on e7, on this square it is closer to the king and is well placed to offer its defensive prowess in the event of a kingside attack by White.

10.0–0

White completes the development of his kingside.

10…b6

Black prepares to develop his bishop on b7, this too we have seen before.

11.Qf3

White's queen gains access to the kingside.

11…Be7?

I can't see any purpose to this move. Black still had the option of bringing his queen to e7 where it would be well placed.

12.Kh1

White tucks his king away in the corner of the board, a possible indication of his intention to push the g pawn.

12…Re8 Black vacates f8 for a knight. 13.g4

2.26 B

White goes up through the gears: 13…Nf8 14.g5 N6d7 15.Rg1

See diagram 2.27.

2.27 B

White slides his rook to the g file. He is well placed to push the h pawn or to bring the queen to the h file.

15…Nxe5?

I don't know why Black keeps making this unforced error, it gifts White the half open f file for future operations, and after 16.fxe5, it allows White to seal the centre.

16.fxe5 Ng6?

Why remove the knight from f8? On f8 the knight performs a much needed defensive role in supporting the h7 pawn, what does it do on g6?

17.Qh5 Nf8

And back goes the knight, maybe it went sight seeing.

2.28 W

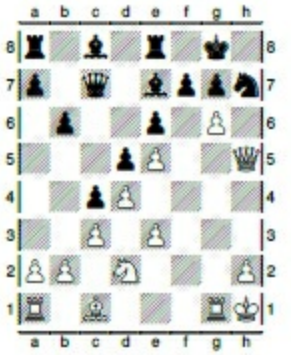
18.Bxh7+!

This is another fine tactical shot by human kind that most engines rejected in favor of 18.Rf1, they don’t know everything.

Incidentally have you noticed that Black has been somewhat negligent with the development of his queenside pieces? As a result of this the rook on e8 stands alone, unguarded, clue!

18…Nxh7 19.g6

This follow up is the whole point.



2.29 B

Black is more or less forced to take the g6 pawn, his alternatives aren’t appealing, 19…f6 or f5 both allow checkmate with 20.Qxh7+ Kf8 and 21.Qh8#.

Back to the game:

19…fxg6 20.Qxg6

2.30 B

White threatens mate on g7 and hits the undefended rook on e8. Black must jettison the rook on e8 if he wants to stay in the game.

20…Bh4 21.Qxe8+ Nf8 22.Rf1 Bb7?

Black misses the point. The prime threat to the f8 knight comes from White's rook on f1. Playing the bishop to b7 discovers the defense of the rook on a8 for the knight, but only safeguards the knight from the White queen, not from the rook. Black had to play 22…Qe7, where it should have been posted on move nine, the end is swift:

23.Rxf8+ Kh7 24.Qh5# 1–0

White created a solid base in the centre with his Stonewall set-up.

Black was perhaps a bit premature with 5…0-0, but not fatally.

Black went wrong with 8…c4, taking all the tension out of the centre, and failed to challenge White on the queenside with any counter-play, he could have embarked on a minority attack on the queenside, more on this in Part Five.

White had a free hand to complete his kingside development, bringing his knight to e5 and swinging his queen over to the kingside.

White continued his press with 14.g4 and 15.g5, ousting the f6 knight from Black's king, but Black had compensated for this with 13…Nf8.

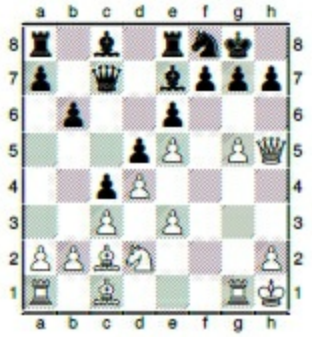
Black made an unforced error with 15…Nxe5, allowing White to seal the centre and open the f file.

But prior to this Black had failed to develop his queenside pieces, meaning there was no tie up between his rooks on the first rank, leaving the e8 rook fatally exposed.

An earlier failing was seen on move nine. Black played 9…Qc7, when 9…Qe7, leaves the queen in touch with the kingside and it would have been able to lend support to the e8 rook. Black missed another opportunity to bring the queen to e7 two moves later when he played the strange 11…Be7, which shuts the queen out of the kingside.

Black failed to develop any counterattack at all, in any shape or form.

By move seventeen White had mobilized three attacking units against Black's king and had an advanced pawn in the g file.

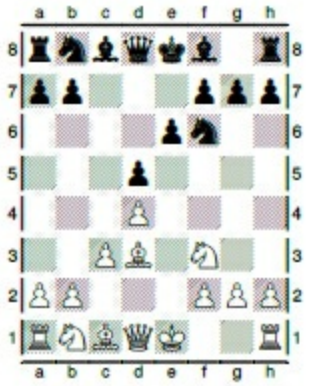


2.31 W

White profited from the undefended rook on e8, and the absence of Black's queen from the kingside with the tactical shot of 18.Bxh7+! The advanced g pawn was an essential ingredient for this attack to succeed as was the rook in the g file. Black had another opportunity to bring his queen to e7 on move twenty-two, but failed to do so.

Game four: S.E A. N. Other Internet 2020

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 d5 3.e3 e6 4.Bd3 c5 5.c3 cxd4 6.exd4



2.32 B

This is an exchange variation of the Caro Kann, as was game two, and again we see White's bishop pair already enjoying open lines, and gazing at the Black kingside.

6…Bd6 7.0–0 0–0 8.Re1.

See diagram 2.33, on the next page.

2.33 B

White targets the e5 square, aiming to play his knight to this central square.

8…Nbd7 9.Qe2 Re8 10.Ne5

2.34 B

White succeeds in getting his knight to the centre.

10…Nf8

Meanwhile Black plays a knight to f8 to shore up his king’s house.

11.f4

White is content for the time being just to reinforce his e5 knight.

11…Ng6

The knight comes out for a look around, but it was fine on f8.

12.g3 Qc7 13.Nd2 b6 14.Ndf3 Bb7

Black’s bishop has no scope on this square, but at least Black has completed his development.

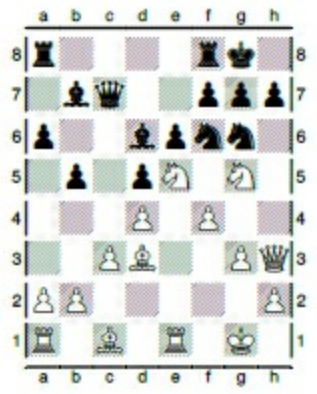
15.Ng5

White targets the vulnerable f7 spot.

15…Rf8 16.Qg2

White prepares to introduce his queen to the kingside.

16…a6 17.Qh3



2.35 B

White has manoeuvred his queen to the kingside, but the knight on g6 blocks his d3 bishop. White will have to advance his kingside pawns to lever the knights away from their defensive duties, and meanwhile Black commences the beginnings of a counterattack on the queenside.

17…b5 18.a3 Rac8 19.Bd2 Bc6 20.g4 Be8

Black reinforces his kingside.

21.Ngf3 a5 22.g5 Nd7 23.Nh4

Prising the Black knight away from g6 is a far better idea than stealing the pawn on b5 with 23.Bxb5. Black could get counter-play with 23…Rb8 24.a4 Nb6. White wont want to part with his light-squared bishop. This line of play takes the bishop away from the kingside, on b5 it is misplaced, winning the pawn is a distraction that White rightly ignores.

Back to the game:

23…Ndxe5?

Why oh why do Black's keep playing this move? It must be catching, a nasty pandemic, sounds familiar.

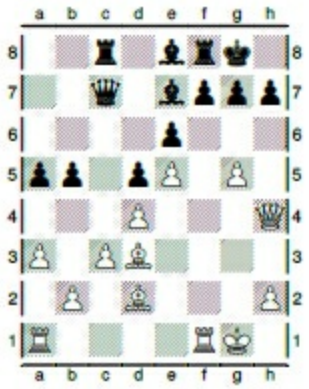
24.fxe5 Be7 25.Rf1

2.36 B

The centre is sealed. White's rook on f1 stares at the f7 pawn, be this as it may, White has no clear cut advantage; it seems pointless for White to exchange knights on g6, after Nxg6, and Black's response of …hxg6, it's not easy for White to organise his major pieces in the h file. White's king is somewhat exposed, but there are no open approaches to the king for Black to exploit. Black has no counterattack in the centre, but he can still pursue his minority attack on the queenside which could hold some promise for him. White may well have to bring his knight back to f3, move his queen onto the g file and sound the charge with the h pawn, but it's Black to move.

25…Nxh4? 26.Qxh4

See diagram 2.37.

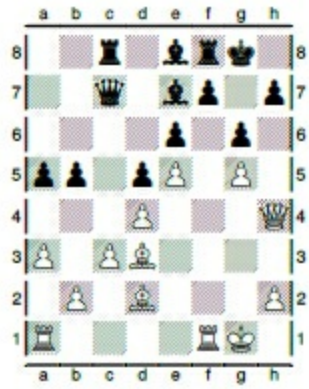


2.37 B

Oh dear! In one move Black has succeeded in gifting White an open line for his d3 bishop, which now combines with his queen in the h file, and threatens mate on h7. Why on earth did Black do that?

The answer is that Black is confident that he can defeat White's queen and bishop in closing the light squares down by advancing the g pawn, and he's correct, but he meets one threat, which he created himself, only to give White a winning initiative by creating more weaknesses on the dark squares around his king and an open highway to his king in the h file.

26…g6



2.38 W

27.Rf3

A rook lift. The rook hurries to the h file with the promise of mate on h7.

27…Kg7

Black remains confident that he can repel any White attack in the h file with 28…Rh8, and if White lets him get this move in then he may be right, but White has no intentions of being so nice, and Black overlooks the purchase that White's pawn on g5 lends to the White queen.

28.Qh6+

Game over.

28...Kg8 29.Rh3 f5

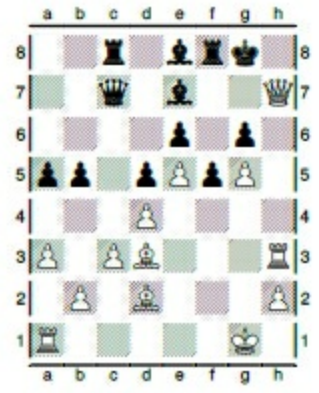
A futile effort to distract White.

30.Qxh7# 1–0

When Black castled on move eight, the position was more or less equal.

2.39 W

However, in the final position (see diagram 2.40.) we see that the defences for Black's king have been rent asunder. White has opened the h file and used it as an open door to gain access to the Black king.



2.40

Black was holding his own in this game up to a point, but he made the customary mistake of exchanging on e5, which seals the centre and gives White the half open f file; but he had play in the queenside with 25…b4, instead of this he played 25…Nxh4? with ruinous consequences.

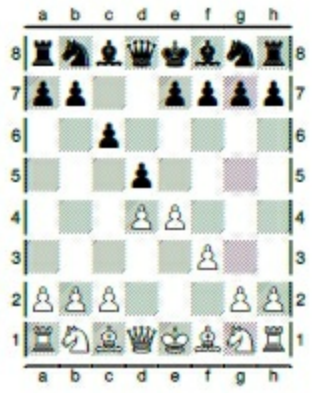
It’s a good idea to exchange off active pieces that pose a threat to your king, but White had arrived at a dead end and had to undertake some major re-alignment of his kingside pieces. Black deluded himself into believing that exchanging the ‘menacing’ knight on h4 was correct and that he could successfully repeal boarders on the kingside, but he acted in haste and failed to give due consideration to the weakening effects of 26…g6.

Going back to what we said in the introduction:

...the outcome of a game of chess is not so much decided by its perfections, but by its imperfections, and even the most brilliant attack has in its midst a mistake, or a number of mistakes, on the part of the defeated side.

Game five: S.E A. N. Other Internet 2015

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.f3



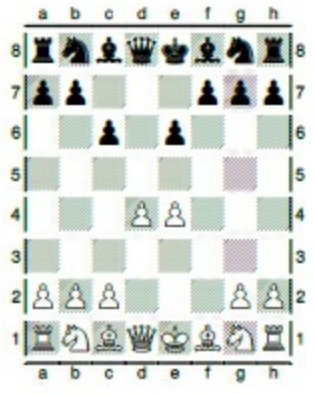
2.41 B

This is the fantasy variation of the Caro Kann.

3…dxe4?!

Black does better with 3…e6. Taking on e4 surrenders the centre. Black no longer has a pawn in the centre on the fourth rank, and he soon becomes out numbered in this sector.

4.fxe4 e6



2.42 W

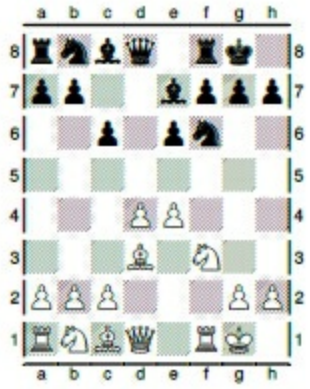
At this early stage White has a number of pluses. Black's un-necessary concession in the centre – 3…dxe4, gives White the better centre, two pawns abreast on e4 and d4, these pawns exert a great influence in the centre and

control squares in Black's half of the board. White also has unfettered lines for his bishops, and after castling on the kingside he will have the half open f file for his rook. White also enjoys a spatial advantage.

Black's position, by comparison, is lacking pawn influence in the centre, he has only one bishop that has a ready-made open line, and he lacks space. White is better.

Meanwhile, however, White must prevent Black's threat of a queen check on h4.

5.Nf3 Be7 6.Bd3 Nf6 7.0–0 0–0



2.43 W

Both sides have completed their kingside development. White has the greater potential, and stands ready to open the b1 – h7 diagonal for his bishop, and he already has a half open file for his rook on f1.

8.c4?!

White needed to play e5 immediately, but he wants his cake and eat it. White secures the d5 square to prevent the Black knight coming to the centre. If White plays 8.e5 then Black's knight can take up residence in the centre with 8…Nd5. White can remove the Black knight with 9.c4, but then the knight comes to b4, hitting the bishop on d3, and White will have to take time out to move the bishop, to avoid this line of play White played 8.c4, but this gives Black an opportunity to equalize.

8… Nbd7?!

Black could have equalized with 8…e5.

9.e5 Ne8

2.44 W

Most of Black's pieces are buried on the first rank. Black is cramped and needs to free his game.

White, on the other hand has ample space and active pieces.

10.Nc3

White brings another piece into the game, the knight is set to come to the central square e4.

10…Nc7

Black needs to present a challenge to White's centre. Advancing the c pawn is too dangerous as it invites the d4 pawn to advance to d5 with the further threat of the pawn advancing to d6 and trapping Black's bishop on e7. In view of this Black needs to play either …f6, …f5 or …b5, in the very near future.

11.Ne4 a6

This doesn’t do anything for Black, he is fishing for ideas, not knowing what to do.

12.Nfg5

This opens a line for White’s queen which is now free to come to the kingside.

12…Bxg5

This is no big surprise, Black is keen to exchange off pieces to ease the cramp in his position.

13.Bxg5 Qe8?

Black had to block the diagonal to his queen with 13…f6.

14.Qh5!?

Interesting! White brings his queen to the kingside to prosecute what he thinks is a slam-dunk win based on the coming 15.Nf6+. He must be very confident since he spurns the opportunity to win Black’s queen with 14.Nd6.

2.45 B

Black can see that White intends 15.Nf6+, opening the diagonal for the d3 bishop and a consequent threat of mate on h7. If White is allowed to play 15.Nf6+, then Black can only delay mate on h7, he can’t stop mate on h7, so not surprisingly Black takes steps to prevent this state of affairs.

14… g6?

Do you get that deja vu feeling?

Black solves one problem, only to create another one which is every bit as bad as the problem he just solved.

14…f5, was the way to go, this opens a diagonal for Black to White's queen. Black's queen on e8 and White's queen are now facing each other, meanwhile, Black closes the b1 – h7 diagonal. White doesn't have the time to play 15.exf6 en passant as he would lose his queen, and his knight on e4 is now under attack, this brings about an exchange of queens, and Black can live to fight another day.

White should have played 14.Nd6, Black would very likely have resigned, but after 14…g6 Black is lost in any case.

2.46 W

Black creates open wounds on the dark squares around his king and he has no means of defending his Achilles heel – the h7 pawn. Black's king is looking down the barrel of a gun.

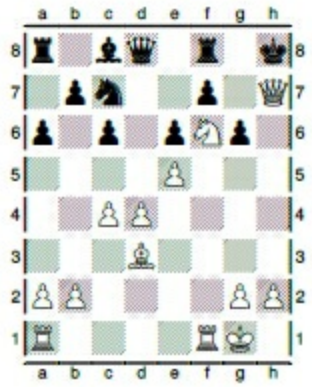
15.Qh6 Kh8 16.Bf6+ Nxf6 17.Nxf6 Qd8 18.Qxh7# 1–0

Black's decision to castle on move seven, was dubious since White could have played the immediate pawn advance of e5. However, White failed to capitalise on this, and Black overlooked an opportunity to equalise shortly

there after with 8...e5.

2.47 W

In the final position Black's defences have been scattered, and White is able to suffocate the Black monarch with the combined might of his queen and knight.



2.48

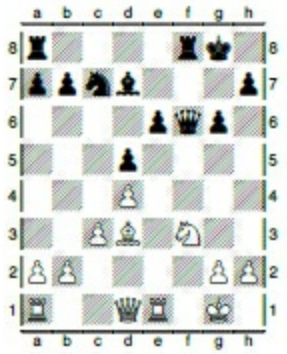
Black's failure to play 8...e5 allowed White to take the initiative with 9.e5; soon after this White mobilised his forces and obtained active piece play on the kingside. Black's attempt to defend his kingside with 14...g6, was ill considered as advancing the g pawn generated significant weaknesses on his kingside, on the dark squares around his king. White was able to infiltrate the holes with 15.Qh6, and finally by bringing a knight to f6, after which Black was lost.

PART FIVE: ATTACKING PAWN STRUCTURES & USING PAWNS

Attacking our opponent's king is always a good idea, but it is not only the king that can become the focus of attack. It is sometimes the case that pawn structures are weak and these weaknesses become a magnet for an attack.

Most typically when we speak of weak pawns it is backward and isolated pawn structures that we are referring to.

Attacks against the backward pawn



1.1 W

As an introduction to this theme we see a typical backward pawn situation in the above diagram.

If we take all the pieces off the board we can see the backward nature of Black's pawn on e6 more clearly.

1.2

White's pawn on d4 prevents Black from advancing his pawn on e6 without Black's pawn being taken. The backward pawn is a significant feature of the position.

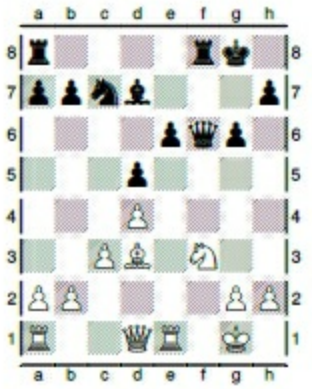
Black's e6 pawn constitutes a fixed weakness, and both sides will lay their respective plans around this one aspect.

When we have a position in which our opponent has a backward pawn it

is important to ensure that the pawn remains backward, in which case we can use it as a target. You might also notice in diagram 1.2, that not only is Black's pawn on e6 backward, but it is also on a half open file, this is the worse case scenario for the backward pawn as it can be directly assaulted via a frontal approach.

To keep the pawn backward White needs to control the square in front of the backward pawn, traditionally the square in front of the pawn is always weak, and such a flaw is referred to as a hole; sometimes a physical blockade of the backward pawn is called for in order to keep the pawn fixed in place, and then a typical plan to exploit the pawn would be to form up attackers in the half open file, and to bring more attacking units to bear against the backward pawn, in a bid to outnumber the defender, and eventually to win the pawn.

The possessor of the backward pawn will also seek to gain control of the square in front of the pawn; if this square can be controlled then the backward pawn can be advanced and the weakness is eliminated, with this in mind let's put the pieces back on the board.



1.3 W

In this position White has comfortable control over the e5 square. White influences e5 three times, with the pawn on d4, the knight on f3, and the rook on e1. Black has only one influence on e5 – the queen on f6. White could further his control over e5, and complete his development with Qe2, and then he could occupy the e5 square with his knight, thus achieving a blockade of the backward pawn on e6. Black's queen and rook in the f file do not

compensate him for the e6 weakling. Defending a backward pawn is a thankless task and can often prove to be a distraction to the defender.

Black quickly went astray in the above position. White to play occupied e5 with his knight - 17.Ne5, and play went 17…Bb5? the bishop is a vital defender of the backward e6 pawn and needed to remain at its post, 17… Qf2+, is of no consequence. White played 18.Bxb5, Black recaptured 18… Nxb5, and White used the knight on b5 as target practice for his queen - 19.Qe2, the Black knight retreats to d6, and White has 20.Nd7, forking queen and rook. Black was hoping to play his knight to e4 thus defending his backward pawn from direct frontal assault, but overlooked the simple knight fork.

It should be noted that these backward pawn positions are very often a slow burn type of attack. Such strategies require patience, and often the prize that we obtain provides only a marginal materiel gain, as we emerge a pawn up, and this is by no means the end of the story. We have won just one battle in what is often a very long and hard fought war.

There are three golden rules to remember for the most effective means of exploiting a backward pawn:

1, Blockade the square in front of the backward pawn with a piece.

2, Amass attacking units in the half open file in front of the backward pawn.

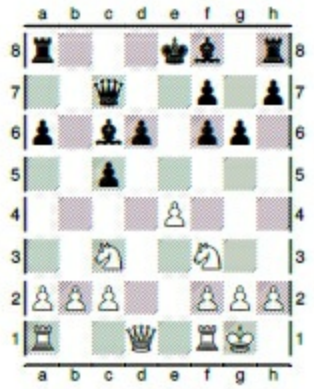
3, If a balance of attackers and defenders is reached then open a second front.

The following game provides an example.

Game one: S.E A. N. Other Internet 2015

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+ Bd7 4.Nc3 Nc6 5.d4 cxd4 6.Nxd4 a6 7.Bxc6 bxc6 8.0–0 Qc7 9.Nce2 c5 10.Nf3 g6 11.Nc3 Nf6 12.Bg5 Bc6 13.Bxf6 exf6

See diagram 1.4, on the next page.



1.4 W

In the above diagram Black has a backward pawn on d6, and White has a piece ready to volunteer for blockading duties:

14.Nd5

This complies with rule one of our three golden rules:

1, Blockade the square in front of the backward pawn with a piece.

14…Bxd5

The knight was far too powerful for Black to suffer, but one blockader is quickly replaced with another:

15.Qxd5

1.5 B

Black's pawn structure is ragged. He has a backward pawn on a half open file which is attacked directly in the open d line, a doubled pawn sequence in the f file, and his rook on a8 is undefended and attacked by the White queen, Black will be hard pressed to defend, advantage White.

15…Rb8 16.b3 Be7 17.Rad1 0–0 18.Nd2

White prepares to introduce another piece into the attack against the besieged pawn on d6.

Do you recognize our three rules of attack here?

1, A PLAN OF ATTACK.

2, IDENTIFICATION OF A POINT TO ATTACK.

3, THE MOBILISATION OF SUFFICIENT FORCE.

White has clearly pinpointed the backward pawn on d6 as the focus of his attention, his plan is to blockade the backward pawn and eventually to win the pawn, at present he is mustering sufficient force.

18…Qb7

Planning to Exchanging queens doesn't help Black at all.

19.Nc4

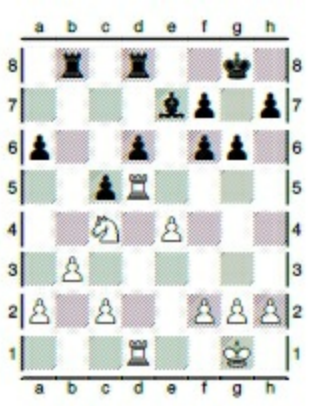
White brings another attacking unit into the fray.

Qxd5 20.Rxd5

One blockader is replaced by another. The press against the backward pawn is relentless.

20…Rfd8 21.Rfd1

See diagram 1.6, on the next page.



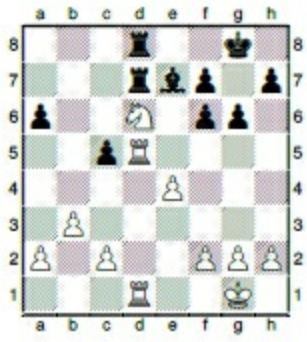
1.6 B

White’s attack has reached its zenith, and Black can no longer hold onto the backward pawn on d6.

White meets the second golden rule:

2, Amass attacking units in the half open file in front of the backward pawn.

21…Rb7 22.Nxd6 Rbd7



1.7 W

White has won his prize. The materiel balance is in his favour, but White has won only one battle in a long war. Converting the extra pawn to a win is not easy. White must tread with great caution and husband his small advantage. The rest of the game is given below

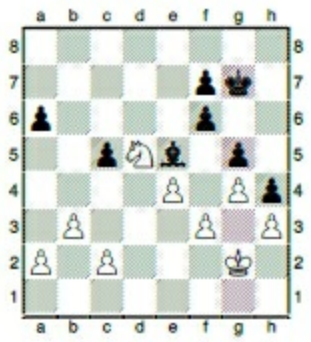
23.Nc4 Rxd5 24.Rxd5 Kg7 25.Rxd8 Bxd8

See diagram 1.8.

1.8 W

White carries his marginal materiel plus into a knight v bishop ending. Black is down, but certainly not out.

26.f3 Bc7 27.g3 h5 28.Ne3 Be5 29.Nd5 g5 30.Kg2 Kg6 31.h3 h4 32.g4 Kg7



1.9 W

White denies any targets to Black's bishop by placing his remaining pawns on light squares, and now he must feed his king into the game.

33.Kf2 Kf8 34.Ke3 Ke8 35.Kd3 Kd7 36.Kc4

See diagram 1.10, on the next page.

1.10 B

White picks a new target, the pawn on c5. His objective now is to use the knight to find additional pawns to attack in the Black camp, and thus to increase his materiel advantage.

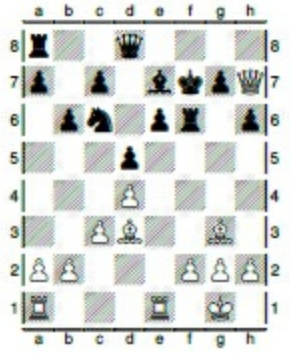
36…Kc6 37.a3 a5 38.a4 Bd4 39.Nc3 Be5 40.Nb5 Bb8 41.Nc3 Be5 42.Nd5 Bd4 43.Kd3 Kd6 44.Nb6 Kc6 45.Nc4 Bf2 46.Nxa5+ 1–0

It is sometimes the case that the defender is able to match the attacker, that is to say that the defender can bring as many units to bear in the defence

of backward pawn as the attacker, in this case an impasse is arrived at.

The backward pawn constitutes a weakness, but one weakness is often not enough; in these instances the attacker has to cast a wider net and find new targets, this may entail taking attacking units away from the backward pawn, thus lifting the siege against the pawn, but in doing so we hope to stretch the defender beyond his capacity to meet our new threats; having identified and targeted new points of attack it's possible to switch back to our first target, the backward pawn.

Game two: S.E A. N. Other Internet 2020



1.11 B

Black has a backward pawn on e6. White has effective control over the hole on e5, and ensures that the pawn on e6 remains backward. Black's only influence over the e5 square is his knight on c6, which of itself looks vulnerable; and yet again the backward pawn finds itself on a half open file, and you might also note that Black is weak on the light squares, hence his next move.

18…Qg8 19.Qxg8+ Rxg8 20.Bh4

White could have won the c7 pawn here, but instead he gets fixated with picking up Black's rook on f6 and winning the exchange.

20…g5 21.Bg3 Bd8 22.Bb5 Ne7 23.Be5

1.12 B

White occupies the blockading square.

23…Rfg6 24.Bd3

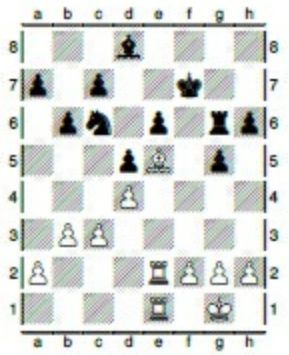
Black’s rook is doomed.

24…Nc6 25.Bxg6+ Rxg6 26.Re2

White prepares to double rooks in the e file, bringing about a direct frontal assault against the backward e6 pawn.

26…Na5 27.b3 Nc6 28.Rae1

See diagram 1.13, on the next page.



1.13 B

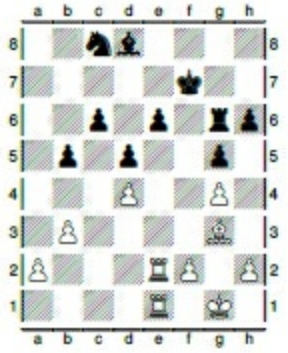
White has succeeded in blockading the backward pawn, and in bringing up the reserves in the shape of his doubled rooks in the e file.

White is the exchange up, and has pressure against the backward pawn, yet Black's position remains intact. White cannot bring any further attacking units to bear against the e6 pawn, therefore, he must create a second weakness in Black's camp.

28…Ne7 29.c4 c6 30.g4 a6 31.Bd6 Nc8 32.Bg3 b5?

This is a mistake. It looks like Black wants to put his knight on b6 and stage a counterattack against White's c4 pawn, but advancing the b pawn provokes tension in the centre and on the queenside, this clash can only succeed in creating a second weakness for Black, he would have done better just to shuffle his pieces back and forwards and await events, he could, for example, have played 32…Rg6, and 33…Rf6, and repeat this manoeuvre, playing a waiting game to see how White was going to proceed, but now White gets his second front.

33.cxb5 axb5



1.14 W

This creates a second backward pawn on c6, but 33…cxb5, would have created an open file, and White could feed his rook or rooks into Black's queenside seeking new targets.

34.h3

White takes time out to secure his g pawn before embarking upon a new phase.

34…Ba5 35.Rc1 Ne7 36.Bd6

1.15 B

This is a body blow for Black as he can no longer hold the c6 pawn, 36… Bb6, will only serve to delay the inevitable loss of his c pawn as White can simply defend the d4 pawn with 37.Rd2, and 37…Ba5, then 38.Rd2 d1.

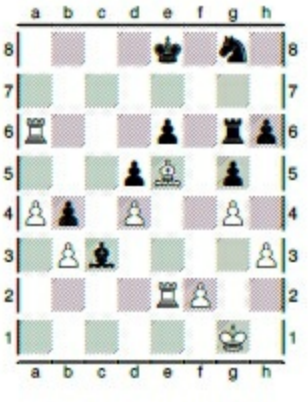
Back to the game.

36... Ng8 37.Rxc6 Bc3 38.Be5 b4

Black has a stubborn streak and continues to resist, but stubbornness alone cannot hold back the tsunami of force that is gathering against him.

39.Ra6 Ke8 40.a4

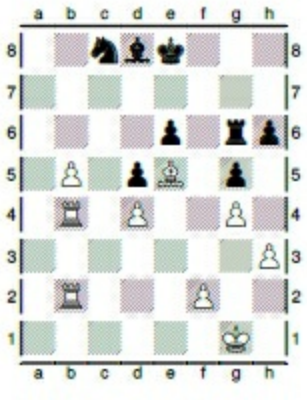
See diagram 1.16, on the next page.



1.16 B

White creates an outside passed pawn, this is a second weakness that Black will find very hard to contain.

40…bxa3 41.Rxa3 Bb4 42.Ra4 Be7 43.b4 Bd8 44.b5 Ne7 45.Rb4 Nc8 46.Reb2



1.17 B

The passed pawn gathers supporters.

46…Kd7?

Black had to try blockading the passed pawn with either B or N to b6.

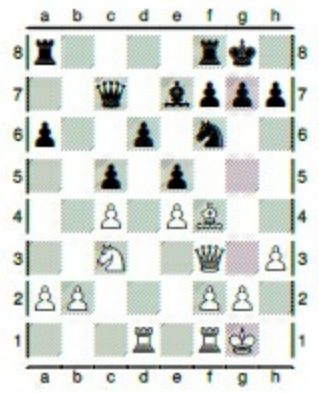
47.Ra2 Rg8 48.Ra6 Rf8

Black losses the thread in time trouble, 48…Nb6 was necessary.

49.b6 Bxb6 50.Raxb6 Nxb6 51.Rxb6 Ra8 Black resigns, 1–0.

Game three: S.E A. N. Other Internet 2016

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+ Nc6 4.0–0 a6 5.Bxc6+ bxc6 6.d4 cxd4 7.Qxd4 c5 8.Qd5 Be6 9.Qd3 Bg4 10.c4 Nf6 11.Bg5 e6 12.Nc3 Be7 13.Rad1 Qc7 14.h3 Bxf3 15.Qxf3 0–0 16.Bf4 e5?



1.18 W

Black creates a backward pawn on d6. This was an unforced error, a mistake. Black had alternatives such as 16...Rab8, or 16...Rfb8, there was no need to damage his own pawn structure, and the black-squared-bishop on e7, will also be howling in derision.

17.Bg5 h6?

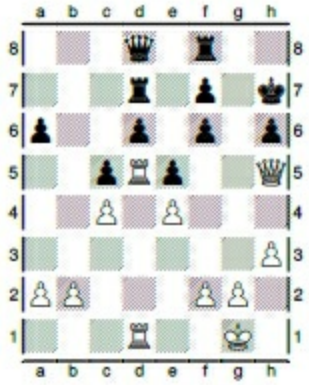
Another unforced error. White can scatter Black's pawns creating further weaknesses.

18.Bxf6 Bxf6 19.Nd5 Qd8 20.Nxf6+ gxf6 21.Qh5!?

This wasn't necessary; it was more accurate on White's part to simply double rooks in the d file, targeting the backward pawn on d6.

23...Kh7 22.Rd5 Ra7 23.Rfd1 Rd7

See diagram 1.19, on the next page.



1.19 W

White has control of the weak square in front of the backward pawn – d5, and he has effected a blockade of the backward d6 pawn, and he has amassed two attacking units in the d file. Black, however, has defended his pawn on d6, but White can now pick off another pawn.

24.Qf5+ Kg7 25.Rxc5 dxc5 26.Qxd7 Qb6

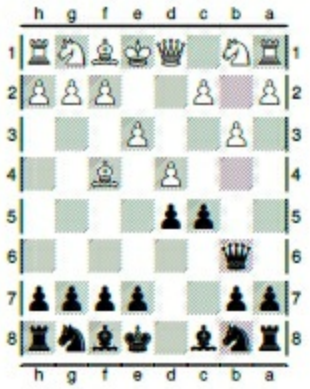
1.20 W

White's campaign against the pawn on d6 has been successfully concluded; he is a pawn up and enjoys undisputed control of the open d file, and stands better. White must now turn his attention to other fields. The rest of the game is given below:

27.b3 a5 28.Qb5 Qxb5 29.cxb5 Rb8 30.a4 Rb7 31.Rd5 Rc7 32.Kf1 c4 33.bxc4 Rxc4 34.b6 Rb4 35.Rb5 Rxe4 36.b7 Rxa4 37.b8Q 1–0

Game five: A. N. Other S.EInternet2021

1.d4 d5 2.Bf4 c5 3.e3 Qb6 4.b3?



1.22 B

Black has adopted a popular line against the London System. In White's haste to develop his dark-squared-bishiop he leaves the b2 pawn undefended, and Black takes advantage of the weakened pawn on b2 with an early queen sortie.

White's method of defence for the b2 pawn is less than good as tell-tale weaknesses appear on the dark squares – c3, and a3, ok these squares are currently covered by the knight on b1, but White will need to develop his knight on b1, and then a3 and c3 become naked; a further consequence of advancing the b pawn is that the pawn on c2 has become backward. White should seek to advance his c pawn to c4 at some point in the future.

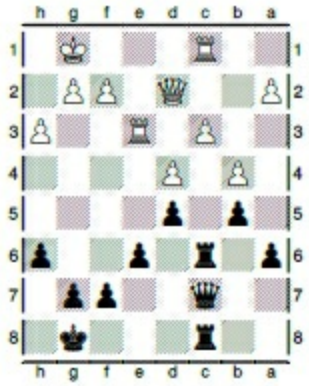
White's best method of defence for the b2 pawn was 4.Nc3, and due to the tactical threat of White bringing his knight to b5, Black can't take the b2 pawn, i.e., 4...Qxb2? 5.Nb5 Na6 6.Rb1 Qxa2 7.Ra1 Qb2 8.Rxa6 bxa6 9.Nc7+. This is a well known line in the London, and White's 4.b3?, suggests that he is unfamiliar with the opening of his choice.

As the game progresses White does not eliminate the backward nature of his pawn in the c file, instead he makes it more emphatic, and this gifts Black easy play:

4...cxd4 5.exd4 Nf6 6.Nf3 Nc6 7.c3 Bf5 8.Bd3 Bxd3 9.Qxd3 e6 10.Nbd2 Be7 11.0–0 0–0 12.h3 Rac8 13.Rfe1 a6 14.Ne5 Nxe5 15.Bxe5 Nd7 16.Bg3 Bd6 17.Bxd6 Qxd6 18.Nf3 b5 19.Ne5 Nxe5 20.Rxe5 Rc6 21.Re3 Rfc8

22.Qd2 Qc7 23.Rc1 h6

24.b4? See diagram 1.23, on the next page.



1.23 B

24...Rc4

Black occupies the weak square in front of the backward pawn; and he already has his major pieces camped out in the c file, advantage Black.

25.a3 a5 26.Rg3 Kh7 27.Qd3+ g6 28.Qd2 axb4 29.axb4 Rxb4

And Black wins a pawn.

30.h4 h5 31.Rf3 Rc4 32.Ra1?!

Rather than accept passive defence White opts to activate his rook, but this drops a second pawn.

32...Rxc3

In spite of being two pawns down White was able to stage a come-back, and had reasonable chances to make a draw, but he failed to take advantage of a tactical opportunity and Black went on to win, however, the prime lesson of exploiting a backward pawn has already been viewed, the rest of the game is given below:

33.Rxc3 Qxc3 34.Qd1 b4 35.Kh2 b3 36.Ra7 Kg7 37.Rb7 b2 38.Qe2 Rc7

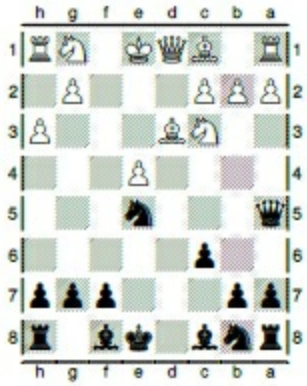
39.Rxb2 Qxd4 40.g3 Qc4 41.Qe5+ Kh7 42.Rb8 Rc8 43.Rb7 Rf8? (43...Kg8 saves the e6 pawn) 44.Qf6? (White missed 44.Qxe6 with good drawing chances) 44...Kg8 45.Rd7 Qc6 46.Ra7 Qc8 47.Qf4 Qb8 48.Qxb8 Rxb8 49.Ra2 Rd8 50.Kg2 Rd7 51.Kf3 Kg7 52.Ke3 e5 53.Rd2 f5 54.f4 d4+ 55.Kf3 e4+ 56.Ke2 Kf7 57.Ra2 Ke6 58.Ra6+ Rd6 59.Ra8 Kd5 0–1

Attacks against isolated pawns

Isolated pawns also make a regular appearance on the chessboard. The method of exploiting them is very similar to that of a backward pawn, i.e., blockade the square in front of the pawn and bring attacking units to bear in the file in front of the pawn; and likewise, the fight isn't easy. The attacking side often has to open a second front and stretch the defender.

Game one: Schroeder. A S.E Birmingham 2002

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 c6 4.f4 Qa5 5.Bd3 e5 6.fxe5 dxe5 7.dxe5 Ng4 8.h3?! Nxe5

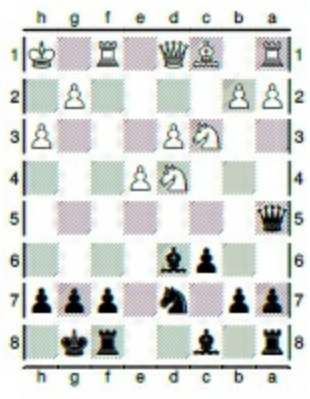


2.1 W

After just eight moves White is saddled with an isolated pawn, and Black already has a blockading knight occupying the square in front of the pawn. To compensate for the structural weakness of the isolona White will point to the open lines that he gets in the shape of the half open f file and the open d file, whether this trade off is in White's favor or not remains to be seen.

9.Nf3 Nbd7 10.0–0 Bd6 11.Kh1 0–0 12.Nd4 Nxd3?! 13.cxd3

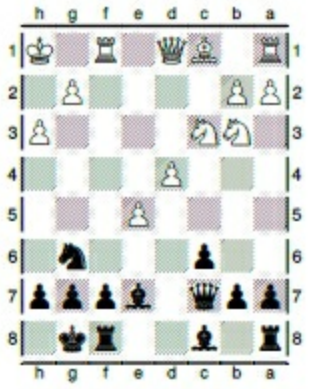
See diagram 2.2, on the next page.



2.2 B

Black decides to exchange on d3, and the resulting pawn structure generates a backward pawn on d3.

13…Ne5 14.Nb3?! Qc7 15.d4 Ng6 16.e5 Be7

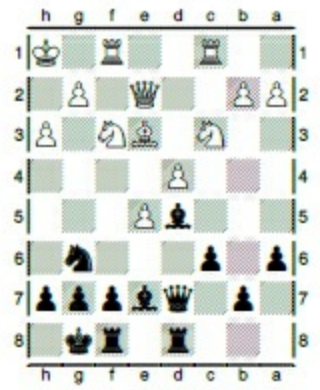


2.3 W

White advances his central pawns up the board, and a backward pawn emerges on d4. Black must now set about blockading White's central pawns and targeting them.

17.Be3 Be6 18.Rc1 Rad8 19.Qe2 a6 20.Nd2 Qd7 21.Nf3 Bd5

See diagram 2.4



2.4 W

Black occupies the blockading square.

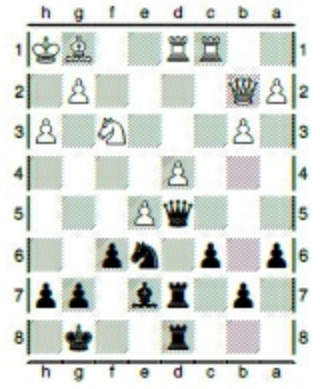
22.Nxd5 Qxd5

One blockader is replaced by another.

23.b3 f6 24.Bg1 Nf4 25.Qc2 Ne6

The scales tip in Black's favor as he has three attacking units drawn up against the backward pawn, so White rushes in reinforcements.

26.Rfd1 Rd7 27.Qb2 Rfd8



2.5 W

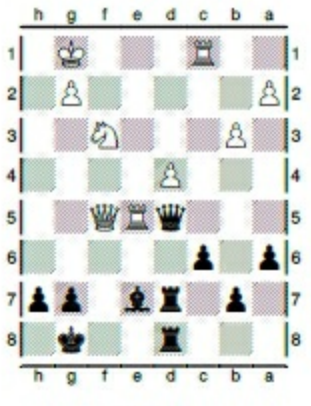
Black looks to have reached his zenith. White has the backward pawn defended by two minor pieces, the bishop on g1 and the knight on f3, Black cannot take the backward pawn without suffering the loss of a major piece for

a minor piece, this allows White to free up one defending unit. Black must hunt elsewhere.

28.Re1 Nf4 29.Qc2 Nxh3!?

This looks good at first glance, and indeed Black wins a pawn, but White has 30.Be3 or 30.Bh2 and the Black knight must eventually retreat to g5, and White can inflict double pawns on Black in the g file, i.e. 30.Be3 Re8 31.Rf1 to protect the f3 knight, otherwise 31.gxh3 and Black has 31…Qxf3+. Black plays 31…Ng5 32.Nxg5 fxg5 and Black has double pawns, but White panics and plays another move.

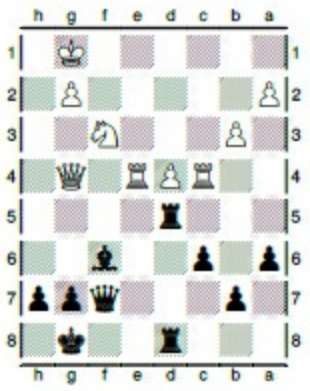
30.Qf5 Nxg1 31.Kxg1 fxe5 32.Rxe5



2.6 B

The exchange on e5 returns the isolated pawn to White. Black hurries to remove his queen from the attentions of White's rook and offers an exchange of queens, but White isn't having any of it. Black still enjoys a press against the pawn on d4 and is now a pawn to the good, advantage Black, but the game is far from over.

32…Qf7 33.Qg4 Bf6 34.Re4 Rd5 35.Rc4



2.7 B

White has overprotected his d4 pawn, so again Black looks at different options.

35…Qh5 36.Qxh5?!

This smacks of over confidence. White is a pawn down so he should avoid simplifying exchanges, especially the exchange of queens. White thinks that the draw is slam-dunk, we will see.

36…Rxh5 37.Kf2 Rhd5

Black maintains the blockade, but again White is able to bring one more defender to bear that tips the scales in his favor, and once again Black must seek new inroads to broaden the conflict and find a means of stretching his opponent.

38.Ke3 Kf7 39.a4 Re8

Black is able to force another piece off the board.

40.Rxe8 Kxe8 41.Ke4 Kd7 42.Rc1

White should be wary of taking this defender away from the d4 pawn. Black is happy to seek new fields of conflict, White, however, should not be so keen to follow this path.

42…Rh5 43.g4 Rh3

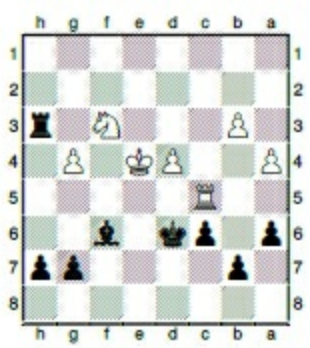
White's g pawn can be attacked from behind with Black's rook moving to g3.

44.Rc3

White winds up a tactical right hook, intending 45.Ne5+, picking up the undefended Black rook. Black must be alert.

44…Kd6 45.Rc5?

See diagram 2.8, on the next page.



2.8 B

This is a mistake that costs White his cherished pawn on d4, but it's far from obvious.

Take a little time out and see if you can spot the tactical weakness.

White has a chain of dependency among his pieces. The king defends the knight, and the knight defends the d4 pawn, which in turn defends the rook on c5, if this chain can be broken then the whole lot will tumble down and fall.

45…Bxd4!

The bough is broken.

If White captures the bishop with 46.Kxd4, then Black gets his materiel back with 46…Rxf3, and if the knight captures on d4 then Black takes

White’s rook on c5, but White will not be cowed and seeks activity with his rook.

46.Rf5 Bf6 47.g5 Be7 48.Rf7 g6 49.Rg7 b5

Black mobilizes his queenside majority, looking for a new theatre of operations.

50.axb5 axb5 51.Rg8 Rg3

Another target appears. White needs to defend a pawn again.

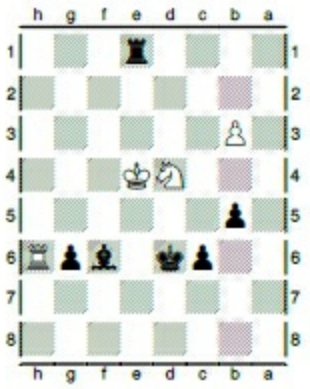
52.Kf4 Rh3 53.Rc8 Rh1 54.Nd4

Is White finally getting some counter-play? Too little too late me thinks.

54…Rf1+ 55.Ke4 Rc1 56.Rh8 Bxg5 57.Rxh7 Bf6 58.Rh6?

The final mistake.

58…Re1+



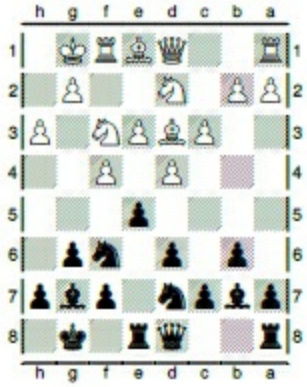
2.9 W

White’s king is tied to the defence of his knight on d4, if the king moves away from the knight then it will fall to the Black bishop, this only leaves White one move for his king – 59.Kd3, but then comes 59…Rd1+, forcing the king to move and revealing a double attack against the knight on d4 which will fall on the next move. White’s resistance was broken and he

resigned.

Game two: Binngssely. L S.E Margate 1984

1.d4 g6 2.e3 Bg7 3.Bd3 Nf6 4.c3 0–0 5.f4 b6 6.Nf3 Bb7 7.0–0 d6 8.Bd2 Nbd7 9.h3 e6 10.Be1 Re8 11.Nbd2 e5



2.10 W

White has adopted a Stonewall set-up, but Black has been quick to challenge White's control of the centre with the pawn advance of e7 – e5, and Black threatens to push on with his e pawn forking White's bishop on d3 and knight on f3. White might want to exchange pawns on e5 once, but not twice as he will end up with an isolated pawn on e3, but wisdom deserts White, and he quickly ends up with a structural defect.

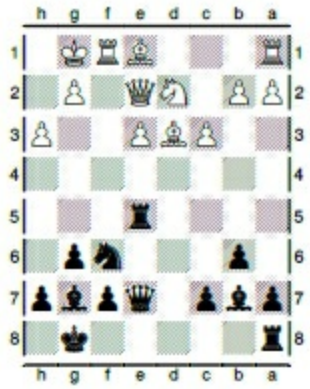
12.fxe5 dxe5 13.dxe5 Nxe5

2.11 W

White faces the unpleasant prospect of an attack against his undefended bishop on d3, so he exchanges on e5, removing one attacker and brings his

queen up to defend the bishop on d3. However, this does not eliminate the isolated pawn on e3, and Black quickly homes in on this weakness.

14.Nxe5 Rxe5 15.Qe2 Qe7



2.12 W

White is on the back-foot. His opening advantage has disappeared, and Black has control over the square in front of the pawn – e4.

16.Nc4

This defence provides only temporary respite for White as the knight on c4 cannot be maintained on its defensive post.

16…Re6 17.a4 Rd8

Black takes time out from the assault against the e3 pawn in order to complete mobilization of his forces, the rook now makes an appearance on an open file, this improves Black's position, and the weakness on e3 is not going to disappear.

18.Bh4 Ba6

Black targets one of the defenders of the isolated e3 pawn. White must bring up reserves to defend the beleaguered pawn on e3.

19.Rae1 Re8

Black brings yet more pressure to bear on the besieged pawn.

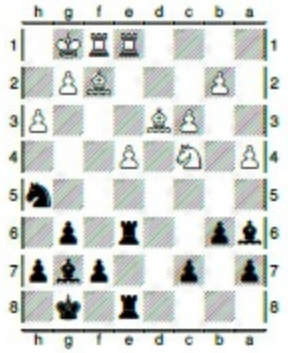
20.e4

The pin against Black's knight on f6 allows White to advance his e pawn, and again White buys respite, but advancing the e pawn opens a diagonal to his king, and this allows Black to break the pin against his knight on f6, and thus renew the attack against the isolated pawn.

20…Qc5+ 21.Bf2 Qh5 22.Qxh5

The exchange of queens favors Black.

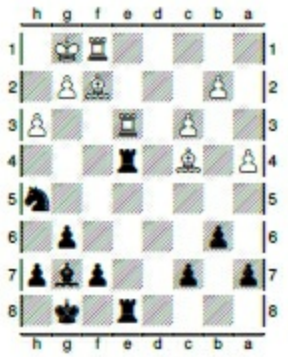
22…Nxh5



2.13 W

White has run out of defenders for his isolona.

23.Re3 Bxc4 24.Bxc4 Rxe4



2.14 W

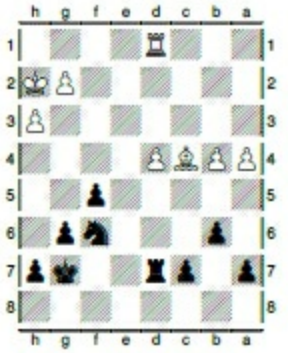
Black takes the pawn on e4;he has won his prize, and now enjoys the smallest of materiel advantages - he is a pawn up. But, he has won only one battle, the war continues, and White is very far removed from having to throw in the towel. Black must remain vigilant as any slight slip on his part could easily allow White back into the game.

25.Rxe4 Rxe4 26.Bd4 Bxd4+ 27.cxd4

2.15 B

This gives rise to another isolated pawn, but White has drummed up a counterattack against Black's f7 pawn, so Black goes on the defensive, but only until he eliminates the weakness at f7, then he can resume the offensive against the new weakness on d4.

27….b3 Kg7 29.Kh2 f5 30.Rd1 Rd7 31.b4 Nf6. See diagram 2.16.



2.16 W

Black has eliminated his weakness on f7 and now prepares to occupy the

square in front of the pawn with his knight. Black enjoys a materiel superiority of pawns on both flanks – three to two on the queenside and likewise on the kingside. White must find a serious spanner to throw in the works.

32.Be6 Rd6 33.Bb3 a6 34.d5 Kf7 35.b5 a5

Black would have done better to exchange on b5. White has done well to neutralize Black's materiel advantage on the queenside, and Black now has a backward pawn on c7, White utilizes this.

36.Rc1 Ne8

Black defends, and sets about regrouping. Swapping pawns with 36… Nxd5 37.Bxd5 Rxd5 38.Rxc7 is an unnecessary concession as this would allow White a degree of compensation as he would have a dominant rook on the second rank and Black's king is cut out of the game as it has to come back to g8 to defend the pawn at h7.

37.Kg3 Kf6 38.Kf3 Rd7

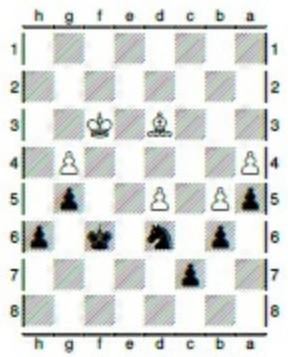
Black vacates d6 for his knight.

39.Re1 Nd6 40.Re6+ Kg7 41.Bc2 Kf7 42.Bd3?

This is a mistake as Black is now able to force an exchange of rooks after which Black will be able to manoeuvre his king and knight to win the pawn on d5.

42...Re7 43.Rxe7+ Kxe7 44.Kf4 Kf6 45.g4 fxg4 46.hxg4 g5+ 47.Kf3 h6

See diagram 2.17, on the next page.



2.17 W

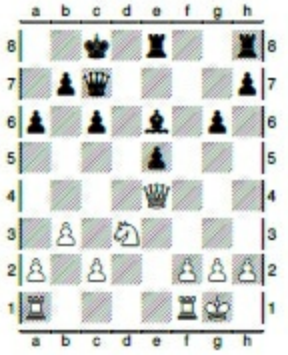
This is decisive. White's king has been forced to give ground. Black has removed all his pawns from light squares meaning that White's bishop has no targets, but more significantly Black's king has direct access to the pawn on d5, and Black will devour this pawn for his main course.

48.Bb1 Ke5 49.Ba2 Nc8 50.Ke3 Ne7 51.Kf3 Nxd5 52.Bxd5

This only helps Black and is a mark of desperation on White's part.

52…Kxd5 53.Ke3 Ke5 54.Kf3 Kd4 0–1

Game three: S.E Cramer. S Birmingham 2001



2.18 B

Black has created an open line, the f file, for a possible attack against White's king, but in doing so he creates an isolated pawn in his own camp, on e5. If Black can succeed in attacking in the f file, then the isolona is of no importance, but it soon becomes apparent that Black's plan is flawed.

22…Bf5 23.Qe3 Bxd3

Black doesn't want to block the f file, and neither does he want to go on the defensive which would mean investing resources in defending his lonely e pawn so he exchanges off bishop for knight on d3; this makes sense as it leaves the f file open for his major pieces and removes a White piece that was putting pressure on the his e5 pawn.

24.Qxd3 Rd8 25.Qe3

It would be a mistake to occupy the blockading square with 25.Qe4 as Black then gets 25…Rd4 hitting the White queen and improving his rook.

25…Rhe8 26.Rfe1 Rd7 27.Re2 Rde7 28.Rae1 Kb8

Black seems to have abandoned any ideas of utilizing the open f and d lines and prepares to defend his isolated pawn.

This is not such a bad policy for Black to adopt; he accepts that he has the one weakness – the isolated pawn on e5, but materiel is equal, and Black can match any attack that White can mount against the pawn on e5.

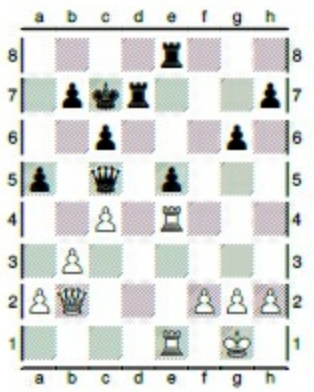
If White is to win he must seek a second front in some sector and create another point of attack.

29.Qg5 Qd6 30.Re4

2.19 B

White affects a physical blockade of the isolated pawn.

30…Qc5 31.c4 Kc7 32.Qd2 Rd7 33.Qb2 a5? See diagram 2.20, on the next page.

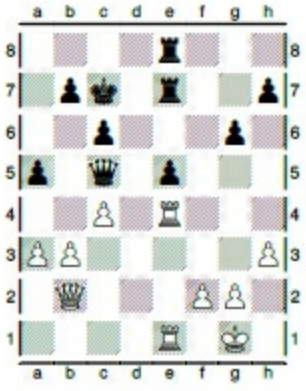


2.20 W

Black sets a trap. White's king has no out squares making it vulnerable to a back rank mate, with this in mind Black baits White by allowing him to win the pawn on e5, but this would be a big mistake by White, i.e.,: 34.Rxe5? Rxe5 35.Qxe5+ Qxe5 36.Rxe5 Rd1+ 37.Re1 Rxe1#.

Black's trap, however, is too transparent, and White can easily counter the ruse by giving his king an out square, moreover, advancing the a pawn to a5 has gifted White the means of opening a second front.

34.h3 Rde7 35.a3



2.21 B

35…g5

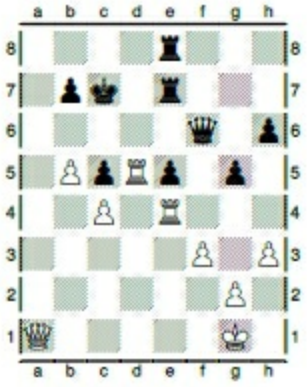
It’s too late for this now.

White cannot bring any more pressure to bear against the isolated pawn on e5, so he commences operations on the queenside, opening a second front.

36.b4 axb4 37.axb4 Qd6 38.b5 c5 39.Qa1 h6

39…h5 would have been a better try.

40.Rd1 Qg6 41.f3 Qf6 42.Rd5



2.22 B

White has manoeuvred his rook to the d file to seek a new target – the pawn on c5. Note how White has achieved this whilst also maintaining the pressure against the isolated pawn on e5. White’s opening of the queenside now bears fruit as Black is forced into a concession. Black cannot defend both the e5 pawn and the newly threatened pawn on c5, he must loose one or the other, or if he chooses to defend the c5 pawn by advancing the b pawn to b6 he exposes his king; a bad choice to have to face, and Black goes wrong.

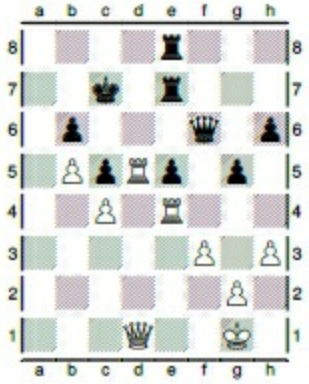
42…b6?

Better to go down a pawn than open avenues of attack to your king. White now takes advantage.

43.Qa7+ Kc8 44.Qa8+ Kc7 45.Qa7+ Kc8 46.Qa6+ Kb8 47.Qa1 Kc7

48.Qd1

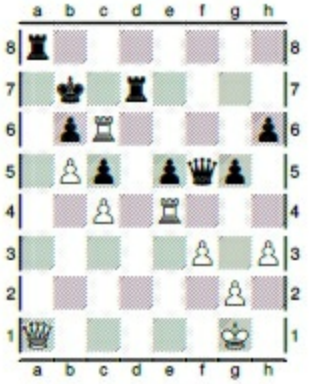
See diagram 2.23, on the next page.



2.23 B

Giving checks to the Black king doesn't further White's aim, instead White seeks a different approach.

48…Qf5 49.Rd6 Rd7 50.Rc6+ Kb7 51.Qa1 Ra8?

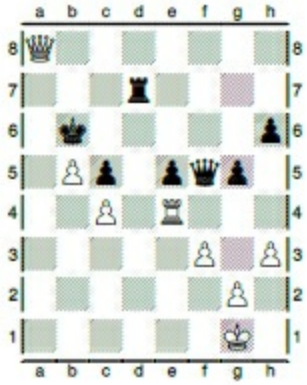


2.24 W

Black daren't permit the White queen access to a6 with check so he is more or less forced into defending this approach to his king, but this provides a tactical stroke for White.

52.Rxb6+ Kxb6 53.Qxa8

See diagram 2.25.



2.25 B

This is decisive. Black has no counter-play, he is pawn down, his king is exposed and White threatens Qc6+, picking up the rook on d7. Black can try to cover his king or play the pointless 53…Rd1+.

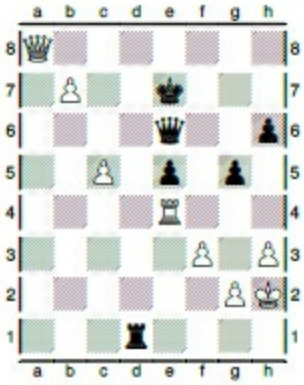
53…Rb7 54.Qa6+ Kc7 55.Qc6+ Kb8 56.Qxc5

2.26 B

White wins a second pawn and has two connected passed pawns ready to roll down the board. Black is not long for this life.

56…Rc7 57.Qd6 Kc8 58.c5 Rd7 59.Qa6+ Kd8 60.b6 Qe6 61.Qa8+ Ke7 62.b7 Rd1+ 63.Kh2

See diagram 2.27, on the next page.



2.27 B

Black must give up a piece with 63…Rb1, to prevent White having a second queen. The position is hopeless for him, and he resigns.

Mobile pawns and how to use them

We have seen in the previous section how pawns can become static targets, but the other side of the coin sees pawns used as a mobile strike force. Once pawns gather momentum they can be un-stoppable, such a pawn roller can tear great swathes of ruin into our opponent's position, just what we want.

Game one: S.E A. N. Other Internet 2020

3.1 W

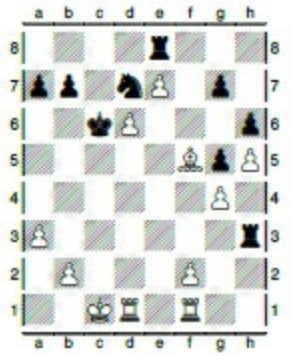
After twenty-seven moves we arrive at the above position. White is two pawns up, and has a mobile phalanx of pawns ready to advance up the board. White wastes no time in propelling his humble foot soldiers into the fray.

28.e4 Rh3 29.e5 Be7 30.d5 cxd5 31.cxd5 Kb6 32.Be3+ Bc5 33.Bxc5+ Nxc5 34.d6

3.2 B

Black needs urgent action to stem White's onward pawn storm through the centre.

34…Kc6 35.e6 Re8 36.e7 Nd7



3.3 W

Cosmetically it would seem that Black has succeeded in damning the flood, but this is just an illusion.

37.Kb1

White wants to bring a rook to the c file – giving check to the Black king and removing its defence from the d7 knight, but 37.Bg6, attacking the rook was more to the point.

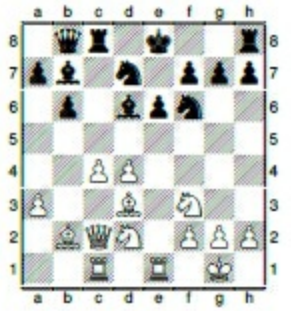
37…Rf3 38.Rd2 Rh3? 39.Rc1+

Black is doomed. After the king moves out of check the knight on d7

hangs, Black resigns.

Game two: S.E Muxlow. J Walsall 1996

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.a3 Ba6 5.Qc2 c5 6.e3 d5 7.Bd3 Nbd7 8.0–0 cxd4 9.exd4 Rc8 10.b3 Qc7 11.Nbd2 Bd6 12.Bb2 Bb7 13.Rac1 Qb8 14.Rfe1 dxc4 15.bxc4



3.4 B

This position is more or less even. The crux of the matter here is White's hanging pawns on c4 and d4. White's pawn duo contest a lot of ground from b5 to e5, and they confer a spatial advantage on White. The drawback to these pawns, however, is that they require pieces to defend them. At present White is investing virtually all of his army in maintaining the two pawns.

White would like to use the c4 and d4 pawns as the tip of his spear and create a mobile wedge to open the heart of Black's position. In order to accomplish this White must first gain control over the squares in front of the pawns, either c5 or d5, but these squares are well defended by Black.

Black would like to induce an advance of one or the other of White's pawns on c4 or d4, and fix them in place, in which case he can use the pawns as a static target, as we saw in the previous section. In order to do this Black could consider castling, putting his f rook on the e file and pushing his e pawn.

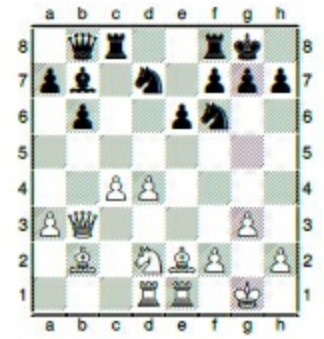
Let's see how things progress.

15…Bf4

Castling was better, but Black seeks to undermine White's grip on the

hanging pawns.

16.Rcd1 Ng4 17.g3 Bxd2 18.Nxd2 Ngf6 19.Qb3 0–0 20.Be2



3.5 B

Black's strong influence in the h1 – a8 diagonal is his trump card, but since Black has failed to implement the idea of advancing his e pawn White seeks to challenge Black's dominance on the long diagonal making it possible for White to advance his d pawn.

20…Qa8 21.Bf3 Bxf3 22.Nxf3 Rc7

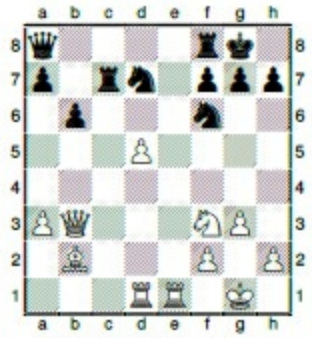
Black eyes White's pawn on c4 as a target, but fails to appreciate that the exchange of bishops in the h1 – a8 line has significantly diluted his grip in the centre, and White sets his pawn duo in motion.

23.d5

3.6 B

23…exd5 24.cxd5

White has a mobile supported passed pawn.



3.7 B

This passed pawn becomes a key feature of the whole game. If White can keep advancing it then the d pawn becomes very dangerous, but if Black can blockade it then he may well be able to snuff the life out of the pawn and capture it, so it's up to White to preserve and propel his pawn on d5 forward, and Black must seek to blockade and ultimately win White's d pawn.

24…Re8 25.Rxe8+ Qxe8 26.d6 Rc5

3.8 W

It looks like White's pawn has gone as far as it can, but other avenues are now open for White and new targets can be found.

27.Re1 Qb8 28.Re7

Threatening mate in two.

28…Qf8 29.a4.

3.9 B

This is a semi-waiting move. The prime idea is to commence a new offensive by bringing the bishop to the a3 – f8 diagonal, and in the meantime this seemingly quiet move asks Black to find a move that doesn't hurt him, and it underlines Black's plight as he is tied to the defence of his king and obliged to maintain the blockade against White's passed pawn on d5.

29…h6 30.Ba3 Rc8 31.Ne5

White sets about lifting the blockade.

31…Nxe5 32.Rxe5 Nd7 33.Re7 Nc5 34.Qf3

White could have exchanged his bishop for the knight, but he wants to keep his good bishop and infiltrate with his queen on b7, thus preventing the knight from maintaining a blockade on d7.

34…Rd8

This makes life easy for White, note that 34…Nxa4, would be a mistake, it hands the game to White:

34...Nxa4 35.d7 Rd8 36.Qc6 Nc5 37.Bxc5 bxc5 38.Re8 f6 (38…Rxe8 39.dxe8=Q) 39.Rxd8 Qxd8 40.Qc8 Qf8 41.Qxf8+ Kxf8 42.d8Q+ Kf7

43.Qc7+ Kg6 44.Qxc5 a6 45.Kg2.

Back to the game:

35.Qc6

The blockade has been broken. The rest of the game becomes a simple mopping-up exercise for White.

35…f6 36.Bxc5 bxc5 37.Qxc5 Rc8 38.Qd5+ Kh8 39.Rxa7 Rd8 40.d7 Qe7 41.Rc7 g5 42.Rc8 1–0

Although White won, it wasn't exactly easy. White needed to be attentive. He needed to find new and different targets and to stretch the Black defences.

We have seen that pushing mobile pawns is potentially a game-winning device. This being the case then we can consider giving up a piece in return for say two or three pawns. These pawns can then be rammed into the heart of our opponent's position.

Game three: Spassky. B Bukic. E Bugojno 1978

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 g6 3.Bf4 Bg7 4.e3 0–0 5.Be2 d6 6.0–0 Nbd7 7.h3 Qe8 8.c4 e5 9.Bh2 Qe7 10.Nc3 e4 11.Nd2 Re8 12.Nb5 Qd8 13.c5 a6

See diagram 3.10.

3.10 W

In the above position you would expect a timely retreat on the part of the knight on b5, but White sees a means of getting three pawns for the minor piece, play continued:

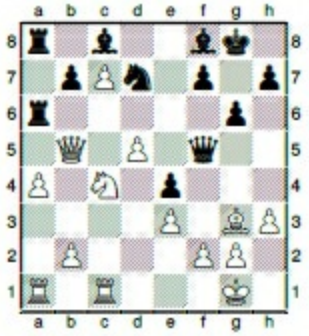
14.cxd6 axb5 15.dxc7 Qe7 16.Bxb5

3.11 B

White's pawn on c7 is a monster. Nobody wants a protected passed pawn on their second rank, but Black has it well blockaded, and it's not apparent yet if the pawn is strong or weak. White has two more pawns on the queenside that he might race up the board to support the pawn on c7 and create other threats.

16…Bf8 17.Nc4 Qe6 18.Qc2 Qd5 19.a4 Re6 20.Rfc1 Ne8 21.Qc3 Nef6 22.Ne5 Nb6 23.Nc4 Nfd7 24.Qb3 Rf6 25.Bxd7 Nxd7 26.Qb5 Qf5 27.Bg3 Rfa6 28.d5

See diagram 3.12, on the next page.



3.12 B

A second pawn rushes up to support the passed pawn on c7.

28…Qf6 29.a5 h5 30.b4 h4 31.Bh2 Qf5 32.Rf1 g5 33.f3

White seeks to broaden the conflict by opening a second front.

33…Rg6

Black has contained White's pawns, but at a price – his rook on a8, the bishop on c8 and his knight on d7 have become little more than spectators, they can't get into the game, but Black casts his eye over the White kingside looking to drum up some counter-play.

34.Rad1 exf3 35.Rxf3 Qc2 36.Rd2 Qc3 37.d6 Ra6 38.e4 Qc1+ 39.Rf1 Qc3 40.Qd5

3.13 B

White finds a new target – the pawn on f7.

40…Nf6? See diagram 3.14.

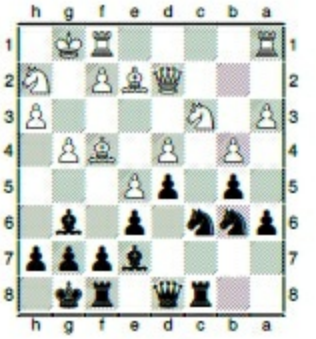
3.14 W

This meets the immediate threat against f7, but Black has lifted the blockade of White's pawns, and White strikes.

41.Rxf6 1–0

Black resigns as White cannot be prevented from promoting one of his pawns, a possible continuation might go: 41...Qxf6 42.d7 Bxd7 43.Qxd7 Rc6 44.Ne5 Rc1+ 45.Rd1 Rc2 46.Rf1 Qe6 47.Qa4 Rc3 48.Nxg6 fxg6 49.b5 Rc4 50.Qa2 Qxe4 51.c8Q.

Game four: Nann. V S.E Derby 2004



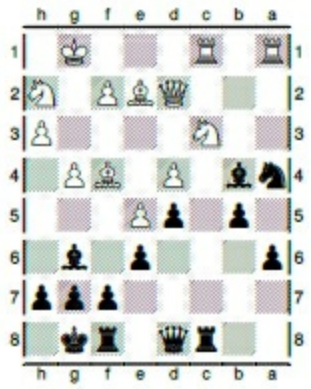
3.15 B

Black to move played 19…Nxb4!?

Most engines prefer 19...Nc4 or 19...f6, however, I find Black's idea to be enterprising. Black is going to use a pin against the knight on c3 to get his materiel back and bag White's queenside pawns, giving Black two connected

passed pawns on the queenside, and a decisive advantage.

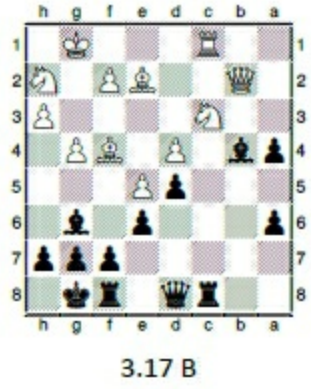
20.axb4 Bxb4 21.Rfc1 Na4



3.16 W

Black attacks the unfortunate knight on c3 more times than it can be defended, it looks like his idea of 19...Nxb4, was a good call. White is obliged to give up the exchange in a bid to off-set Black's initiative; all engines now give Black a firm advantage; Homo sapiens1 - metal mind 0!

22.Rxa4 bxa4 23.Qb2



3.17 B

At the cost of the exchange White ensures that he remains a piece to the good. White also breaks the pin against his c3 knight and shatters Black's queenside pawns. However, Black still has mobile passed pawns in the a file, and engines prefer Black.

23…Qa5 24.Na2

White’s knight is very poor on this square, but White feels the need to blockade Black’s a4 pawn.

24…Be7 25.Bd2 Rxc1+ 26.Qxc1 Qb6 27.Nf3 Rb8 28.Kh2 a3 29.Bc3 a5

Black has the initiative, and ideally he would like to re-unite his two separate pawns on the queenside.

30.Ne1 Qb3 31.Qd2 Bb4 32.Bxb4?

This gives Black exactly what he wants. White should have avoided this line.

32…axb4

3.18 W

Black’s passed pawns are mobile and very dangerous. White is hard pressed.

33.Nd3

This was White’s big hope – he threatens to win one of Black’s queenside pawns, Black doesn’t oblige.

33…Bxd3 34.Bxd3 Qa4

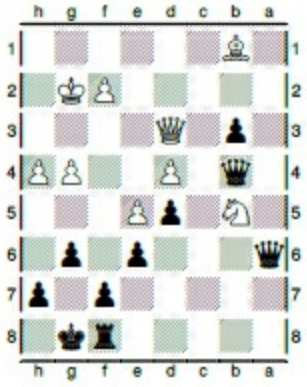
Black moves his queen out of the path of his pawn duo, what can stop the forward march of these two pawns now?

35.Bb1 b3 36.Nc3 Qb4 37.Qd3 g6

The check on h7 wasn’t fatal, but why allow counter-play?

38.Kg2 Rc8 39.Nb5 a2 40.Nd6 Rf8 41.h4 a1=Q 42.Nb5 Qa6

See diagram 3.19.



3.19 B

White resigns.

Competing pawn majorities

Pawn majorities can come into being as a specific part of an opening, and on other occasions a pawn majority occurs as a result of pawn exchanges. However, the advent of this phenomenon creates an imbalance and confers a localized advantage in the sector of the board in which a pawn majority arises.

When we see a majority in one part of the board, for player A, it can often create a corresponding majority for player B in another sector of the board; and as a result of this we see competing majorities. In these instances a race can break out to see which side can be first to create a passed pawn, and advance to promotion.

Game one: Adrian. D Matthias. K Oberliga Nord 2002

1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Bd3 c5 5.c3 Nc6 6.Nbd2 Bd6 7.0–0 0–0 8.dxc5 Bxc5 9.e4 dxe4 10.Nxe4 Nxe4 11.Bxe4 Qxd1 12.Rxd1

4.1 B

This line of play comes from the Colle opening.

White has a majority of three against two on the queenside, whereas Black has a majority of four against three on the kingside.

It is natural for both sides to play to their respective strengths, therefore, White will seek to push his queenside majority and Black will advance his

kingside majority, but as Black's king resides behind his kingside pawns he must be careful not to expose his king to an attack. White doesn't have this problem.

The aim of advancing a majority of pawns is to create a passed pawn, this, however, may not be how the decisive blow is landed. As play commences other opportunities may come into being, therefore, we must be flexible and keep a weather eye open for a chance to switch into a new gear and change the path of our endeavors.

In our first example both side initially march forward with their competing majorities.

If we view the position in diagram 4.1, it reveals that White is slightly better. White has a number of positional pluses. In the first instance he has a rook on the only open file – the d file. It is far easier for White to develop his bishop on c1 than it is for Black to develop the bishop on c8. Black's bishop on c5 is an easy target for White to get his majority moving with a quick b2 – b4 advance. Black's knight on c6 is subject to being exchanged by White's bishop, and the subsequent re-capture of ...bxc6, would shatter Black's queenside pawns. White's bishop on e4 is also a target for a quick f7 – f5 advance, but since this may provoke an exchange on c6, Black should not hasten to play this.

The game continued:

12…f6 13.b4 Bb6 14.Ba3

White sets a trap, he intends to advance with b4 to b5 hitting the knight on c6 and opening a diagonal for his a3 bishop attacking Black's rook on f8. However, it is not too difficult for Black to side step this transparent idea and he succeeds in challenging White's rook in the d file.

14…Rd8 15.Rxd8+ Nxd8

Recapturing on d8 with the knight removes the possibility of White exchanging bishop for knight on c6, but Black remains second best.

4.2 W

White has the freer game. White can swing a rook onto the d file in one swift move, and he can resume the forward march of his majority with c4 and c5, but he does need to find a new home for his a3 bishop. Black, by comparison, still has much to do. Black needs to re-deploy his knight on d8, he needs to get his c8 bishop into the game and he needs to bring the rook on a8 into play, advantage White.

16.c4 e5 17.c5 Bc7 18.Bd5+ Be6 19.Rd1 Bxd5

19…Kf7 looks better.

20.Rxd5 Ne6 21.Kf1 Rd8 22.Rxd8+ Bxd8 23.Bc1

4.3 B

Black seems to have eased his position somewhat. The prime difference between the two sides now is that White's king can come to the queenside

very quickly, it only takes three moves for the White king to arrive on c4, via e2, d3 and c4. Black's king would take four moves to arrive at c6, and White is ready to further the advance of his majority with a4 and b5.

23…Kf7 24.Ke2 a5

This only works if White is obliging enough to exchange on a5.

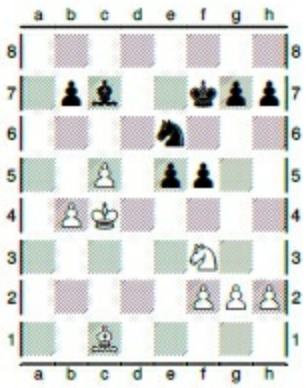
25.a3 axb4 26.axb4

This clarifies White's majority.

26…Bc7 27.Kd3 f5

Black starts to mobilise his majority, but is it too late?

28.Kc4



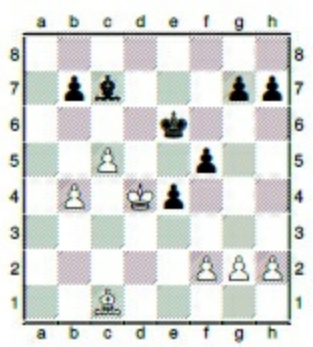
4.4 B

White's king is well placed to help support the advance of his majority.

28…e4 29.Nd4 Nxd4

29…Bxh2, may have been better for Black, but Black places priority on improving the placement of his king in the hope of using his king on the queenside to contest White's majority, after which he will be better placed to advance his kingside majority.

30.Kxd4 Ke6



4.5 W

Black succeeds in bringing his king closer to the queenside, but it affords White the opportunity to guard his h2 pawn, had Black played 30…Bxh2, the game is most likely a draw.

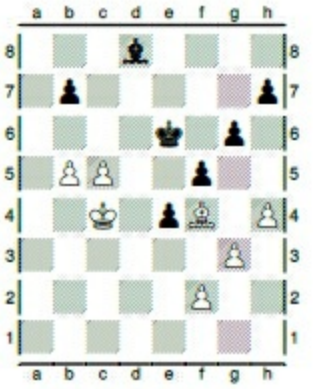
31.g3 Bd8

31…b5, is the recommendation of engines. White may retain a very small plus, but the win is slipping into a draw.

32.h4

White clamps down on the dark squares.

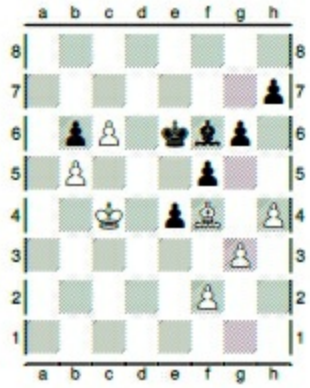
32…g6 33.Bf4 Bf6+ 34.Kc4 Bd8 35.b5



4.6 B

White marches on.

35…Bf6 36.c6 b6



4.7 W

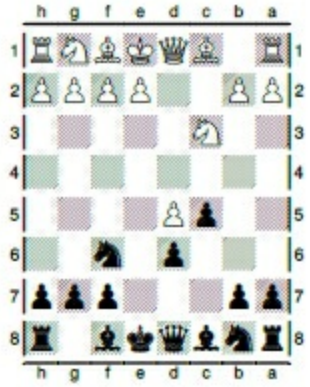
White achieves his aim: he has created a passed pawn, and Black's pawn on b6 cannot be defended.

37.Bc7

Black will be faced with two connected passed pawns, these cannot be stopped, Black resigns.

Game two: Josep. P. R Chandrasekar. P. K Dos Hermanas 2009

1.d4 e6 2.c4 Nf6 3.Nc3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 d6



4.8 W

This is a Benoni opening.

Black deliberately engineers this structure. The early pawn exchanges were intended to create an imbalance whereby Black has a majority of three pawns against two on the queenside, and White has a majority of two against one in the centre.

In these situations we often see White trying to smash through in the centre whilst Black will attempt a break through on the queenside.

For White to succeed he must advance a pawn to e5, and Black must stage a general advance on the queenside. Prior to this both parties must also develop their forces and deploy in such a fashion as to further their aims, play continued:

6.e4

White takes a step into the centre.

6…g6

The fianchetto is typical for Black in this opening.

7.f4 See diagram 4.9.

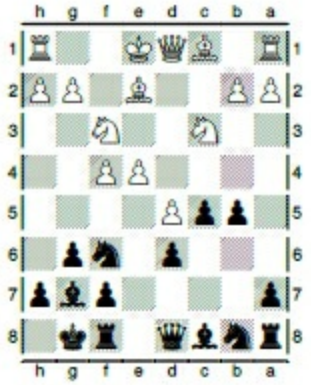
4.9 B

White wastes no time in bringing up reserves, and has gained an influence over e5, but he is falling behind in development. White daren't ignore his development, the promising e5 advance is in place, but it must wait.

7…Bg7 8.Nf3

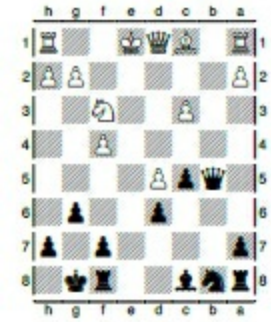
Good development. The knight places another influencing factor on e5.

8…0–0 9.Be2 b5



4.10 W

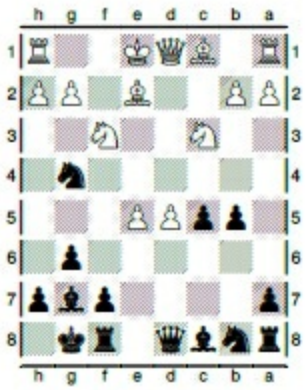
Black has completed the development of his kingside, and his king is safe, therefore, he lashes out on the queenside. It may look like Black is giving up a pawn for nothing, but White takes the pawn at his peril and walks into the jaws of a trap, i.e. 10.Nxb5 removes the guard from the e4 pawn and Black would be delighted to nab White's big centre pawn with 10…Nxe4, whereas 10.Bxb5 and White still defends the e4 pawn, doesn't he? Black can play 10…Nxe4 anyway, the point is that Black has opened up the diagonal for his bishop on g7, so if White routinely captures on e4 with 11.Nxe4 Black plays 11…Qa5+, and meets 12.Nc3 with 12…Bxc3+, removing the guard from White's bishop on b5, and after 13.bxc3 Black takes the bishop on b5, see below.



White’s offensive capacity in the centre has disappeared; his king is exposed, and subject to a check from the Black rook coming to e8; accordingly White declines the b5 pawn, and makes a counter lunge in the centre, but his king still needs to find a safe harbour.

Back to the game:

10.e5 dxe5 11.fxe5 Ng4



4.11 W

White has succeeded in mobilizing his centre pawns, but his position is precarious, his centre pawns are far from safe, the pawn on e5 is in immediate danger, he still needs to castle to complete the development of his kingside, and Black can advance his queenside with b4, knocking the c3 knight of its perch. White looks for a tactical solution to solve his problems.

12.Bg5 Qa5 13.0–0 See diagram 4.12.

4.12 B

White has succeeded in castling, bringing his king to relative safety, and deliberately leaves the e5 pawn up for grabs, and now it is Black who must be cautious. Black's entire queenside army lies dormant, the rook on a8 looks vulnerable, his pawn on b5 is attacked, taking on e5 is a luxury he can ill afford.

13…c4

Black safeguards his queenside, but White has a dangerous looking passed pawn in the d file, and Black still needs to develop his queenside pieces. White looks for more tactical play.

14.Be7

This looks reckless, White abandons the e3 square to Black's knight, White is playing with fire.

14…Re8 15.d6

4.13 B

White's pawn on d6 looks menacing. Black's rook on a8 may fall if White can play Qd5, but Black is not without tactical resources.

15…Qb6+ 16.Kh1 Ne3

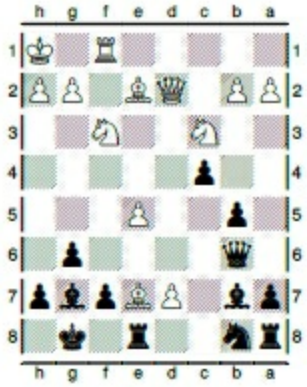
White was probably hoping for 16…Nf2+, when 17.Rxf2 Qxf2 and 18.Qd5

Back to the game:

17.Qd2

17.Nd5 may have been better.

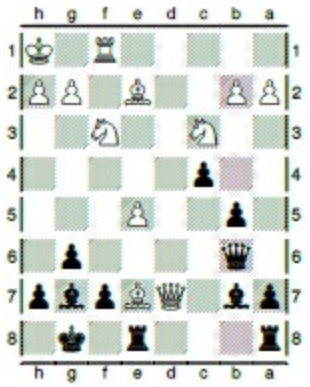
17…Nxf1 18.Rxf1 Bb7 19.d7



4.14 W

This is White's big hope, and the reason why he gave up the exchange. Black is faced with a dilemma: 19…Rxe7?, is a big mistake as White pushes on with d8=Q+, this is ruinous for Black, whereas 19…Rd8, allows White to get the exchange back and maintain a huge passed pawn on d7, advantage White. So White's pawn push in the centre succeeds, or does it? Given that Black's two options of 19…Rxe7?, and 19…Rd8 leave him second best, he looks for a third move.

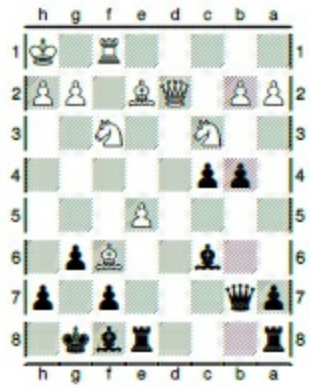
19…Nxd7 20.Qxd7



4.15 B

Black has given up a knight for White's powerful pawn on d7, but Black has good compensation for the piece – he has broken up White's strong central pawn roller that was threatening to do serious damage, he has active pieces in the shape of his rooks and bishops, he is an exchange and a pawn up, and he retains his queenside majority. White has an extra minor piece, but it's not easy to make his extra piece felt, with his big centre pawn on d7 gone White's pawn on e5 is static, and he doesn't have a great deal of activity, play continued:

20…Bc6 21.Qd6 Qb7 22.Bf6 Bf8 23.Qd2 b4



4.16 W

Black's queenside majority springs forward.

24.Nd1 Rac8 25.Ne3

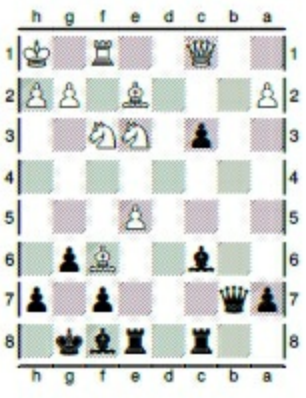
25.Bxc4 would be a mistake as 25…Bxf3 gives back White's extra minor

piece.

25…c3

This breaks up the unity of Black's queenside pawns, but Black obtains a strong passed pawn, and White can't do much more than react to Black's moves, advantage Black.

26.bxc3 bxc3 27.Qc1



4.17 B

White is still a minor piece up, but he's running out of steam.

27…Be4

Black gains control of c2, the square in front of his passed pawn on c3, ensuring that he can advance the c pawn.

28.Ng5

White tries to counter Black's growing initiative, but with little success.

28.Ng4 with the idea of 29.Nh6+, may have been better, but Black can play 28…Bg7 and in the event of 29.Nh6+, his king is safe on f8, or 28…Qb4 when 29.Nh6+ Bxh6 30.Qxh6 Qf8

Back to the game:

28…h6 29.Nxe4 Qxe4 30.Bf3 Qd3 31.Rd1 Qb5 32.Ng4

Somewhat desperate by White, as the threat of Nxh6+, is easy to meet.

32…Kh7 33.h4

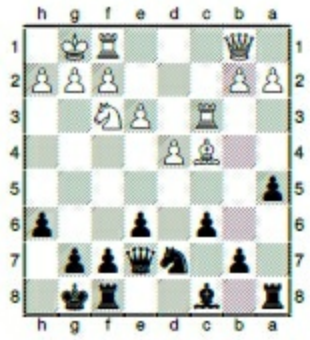
More desperation. 33.Qc2 blockading the further progress of Black's passed pawn on c3 was called for. Back to the game:

33…c2 34.Rd2 Qb1

This seals White's fate, Black wins.

Game three: Schaufelberger. H Ciric. D. M Montreux 1977

1.c4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.d4 Nf6 4.Bg5 Be7 5.Nc3 0–0 6.e3 h6 7.Bh4 Ne4 8.Bxe7 Qxe7 9.Rc1 Nxc3 10.Rxc3 c6 11.Qb1 a5 12.Be2 Nd7 13.0–0 dxc4 14.Bxc4



4.18 B

In the above position we see a familiar theme of competing pawn majorities – Black has a three to two majority on the queenside and White has a majority of two to one in the centre.

14…e5

Black challenges the White centre.

15.dxe5 Nxe5 16.Nxe5 Qxe5

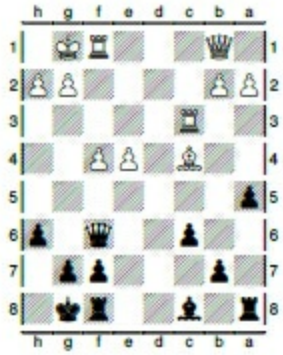
4.19 W

The exchanges in the centre have clarified the situation.

Black still enjoys his majority on the queenside, and White now has a four to three majority on the kingside.

In these positions it is easier for Black to prosecute his attack on the queenside than it is for White to profit from activating his kingside majority, since White is advancing pawns in front of his king so he must be careful not to compromise the safety of his king.

17.f4 Qf6 18.e4



4.20 B

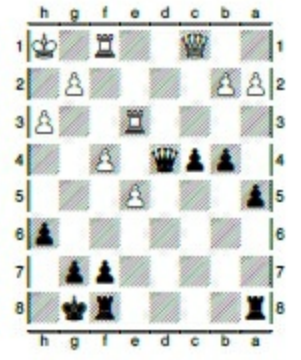
It looks like White is making progress.

18…Qd4+ 19.Kh1

White’s king is much happier tucked away in the corner where it is safe from any surprise checks on the g1 – a7 diagonal.

19…Be6 20.Bb3 Bxb3 21.Rxb3 b5 22.h3 b4 23.e5 c5 24.Qc1 c4 25.Re3

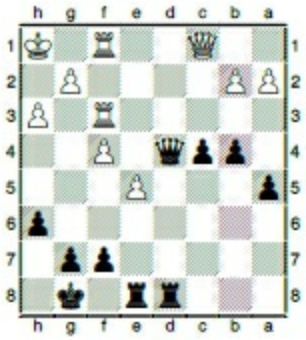
See diagram 4.21.



4.21 B

Black's majority begins to gather steam.

25…Rfe8 26.Ref3 Rad8



4.22 W

The game is finely balanced, but with Black seeking to invade on White's second rank White decides to throw caution to the wind and lashes out:

27.f5

White is sacrificing the e5 pawn. In return for the e5 pawn White gets a mobile f pawn to advance into Black's kingside pawns. White gambles that the advancing f pawn will destabilize the pawn wall in front of Black's king forcing a weakness; in particular White is aiming at the h6 pawn with his

queen on c1, let’s see how this works out for him.

27…Rxe5 28.f6 g5 29.h4 Re4

See diagram 4.23, on the next page.

4.23 B

White was hoping for 29…gxh4, when his plan can pay off, but now it looks like it’s backfiring, the road to h6 is closed and 30.hxg5 fails after 30… Rh4+ 31.Rh3 Rxh3+ 32.gxh3. White’s king is exposed, and Black’s majority will tell: 32…c3 33.bxc3 bxc3 34.gxh6 Qe4+ 35.Kg1 Rd2.Threatening mate on g2. 36.Rf2 Qd4 37.Qf1 Rxf2 38.Qxf2 Qxf2+ 39.Kxf2 c2. White tries to cover up, but Black can invade on the second rank with decisive effect.

Back to the game:

30.g3 Re2 31.hxg5 Qg4

Threatening 32…Qh3+ and Qg2 mate.

32.Kg1 Rdd2 0–1

The check on g2 must be parried, but after 33.R1f2 it is simple for Black:

33… Rxf2 34.Rxf2 Qxg3+ 35.Kh1 Qh4+ 36.Kg1 Qxf2+ 37.Kh1 Qg2#

White lost patience. Instead of pushing forward with 27.f5, he could have maintained the balance with a quiet move such as 27.Kh2, or R1f2 or Qc2.

The minority attack

The purpose of a minority attack is to advance a minority of pawns against a majority, and thereby to create an extra pawn for the opponent on one side of the board. The pawn thus created will be isolated and weak, and can be used as a target of attack; this strategy is most often seen on the queenside.

Game one: Cebalo. M Gurevich. M Corsica Masters Bastia 2003

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.Bg5 Nbd7 6.cxd5 exd5

5.1 W

This position arises from the Queen’s Gambit Declined Exchange Variation.

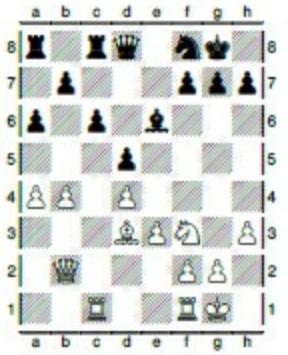
We can see that Black has a majority of three to two on the queenside, and over the course of the game White will advance his minority of queenside pawns against Black’s majority and thereby create an extra pawn for Black on the queenside.

7.e3 Be7 8.Qc2 0–0 9.Bd3 Re8 10.0–0 Nf8 11.h3 Be6 12.Rab1

5.2 B

Having completed his development White prepares to launch his queenside minority against Black's majority.

12…Ne4 13.Bxe7 Rxe7 14.b4 Nxc3 15.Qxc3 Rc7 16.Rbc1 Rcc8 17.Qb2 a6 18.a4. See diagram 5.3.



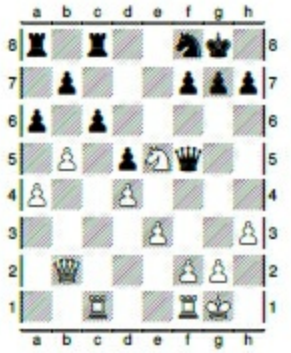
5.3 B

White has swapped files with his queen and rook so that his queen does not stand on the same file as Black's rook on c8. The exchange of two minor pieces is no more than a distraction, White's minority attack is well is under way.

18…Qf6 19.Ne5

Black was threatening to play…Bxh3, winning a pawn as recapturing on h3 would leave White's knight on f3 hanging.

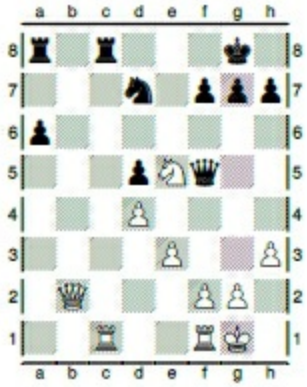
19...Bf5 20.Bxf5 Qxf5 21.b5



5.4 B

Black has done his best to delay the onward march of White's minority, but eventually White has his way.

21…cxb5 22.axb5 Nd7 23.bxa6 bxa6



5.5 W

White has achieved his aim, by advancing his queenside minority against Black's majority an extra pawn has been created on the queenside for Black, although at present the pawn is a passed pawn in the a file, and enjoys the support of the rook on a8, it still remains deep within Black's camp. The pawn can be blockaded and targeted.

24.Nc6

White tries a tactic, 25.Ne7+, is in the air, forking Black's king, queen and rook. Black must prevent this.

24…Qe6 25.Qb7

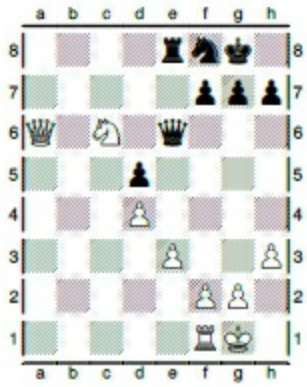
White is still playing a tactical card, as he threatens 26.Ne7+ Qxe7 and 28.Rxc8 picks up a rook and wins.

25…Re8 26.Ra1

Black's pawn cannot be held.

26…Nf8 27.Rxa6 Rxa6 28.Qxa6

See diagram 5.6, on the next page.



5.6 B

White's policy has paid off, he is now a pawn to the good. However, White has not won the war, just a battle, there is much that yet needs to be done. Black still has sufficient resources at his disposal to thwart White and perhaps engineer counter-play.

28…Ng6 29.Nb4

White seeks a new target – the isolated pawn on d5, and he would welcome the simplifying exchange of queens.

29…Nh4

Black tries to drum up a counterattack against White's king.

30.Qc6 Rd8 31.Ra1 h6

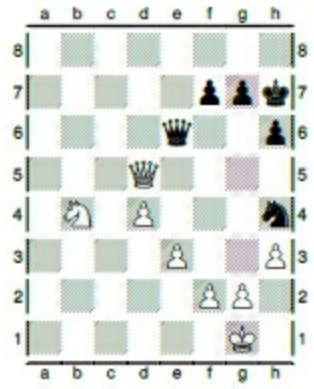
Black finds it necessary to make a bolt hole for his king, 31…Qe4, threatening mate fails to 32.Qxd5! Rxd5 and 33.Ra8+, would lead to mate.

32.Ra8

White seeks a simplifying exchange and brings about the doom of Black's pawn on d5.

32…Rxa8 33.Qxa8+ Kh7 34.Qxd5

See diagram 5.7.



5.7 B

White wins a second pawn.

34…Qg6

Black desperately thrashes around looking for counter-play.

35.Nc6 Qb1+ 36.Kh2 Qc2 37.Ne7 Ng6

37…Qxf2 is dangerous for Black in view of 38.Qa8, threatening mate with 39.Qg8+, Black can make an escape square for his king with 38…h5, but White can break Black's kingside and force a pawn home in the centre: 39.Qg8+ Kh6 40.Qh8+ Kg5 41.Qxg7+ Ng6 42.Nxg6 fxg6 43.Qe5+ Kh6 44.d5 g5 45.e4 Qf7 46.Qf5 Qxf5 47.exf5,

back to the game:

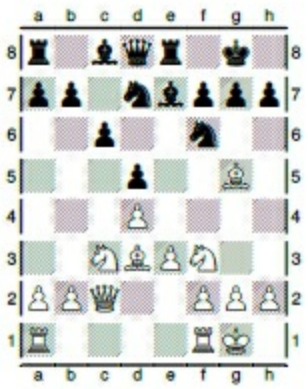
38.Nxg6 1-0

Black didn’t have the heart to battle on two pawns down, and resigned.

Game two: Maxim. T Brandenburg. D Mexico City 2001

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 Be7 6.e3 c6 7.Bd3 Nbd7 8.Qc2 0–0 9.Nf3 Re8 10.0–0

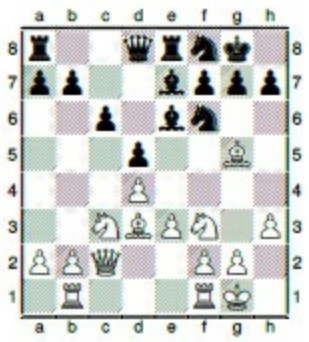
See diagram 5.8, on the next page.



5.8 B

As in the previous example, we have arrived at a point where Black has a majority of three to two on the queenside.

10…Nf8 11.h3 Be6 12.Rab1



5.9 B

White prepares to push his minority against Black’s majority of pawns.

12…Ne4 13.Bxe7 Rxe7 14.b4 White starts to roll forward on the queenside.

14…Nd6

The knight’s influence on b5 is not enough to halt White’s pawn lunge.

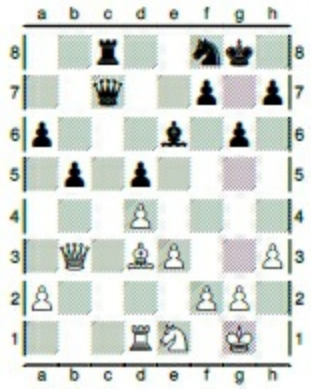
15.b5 Rc8 16.Qa4 cxb5 17.Nxb5 a6 18.Nxd6 Qxd6 19.Qa5

See diagram 5.10.

5.10 B

White targets Black’s queenside pawns.

19…Rec7 20.Rb6 Qe7 21.Rb3 Rc1 22.Qd2 Qc7 23.Qb4 Rc3 24.Rd1 Rxb3 25.Qxb3 g6 26.Ne1 b5

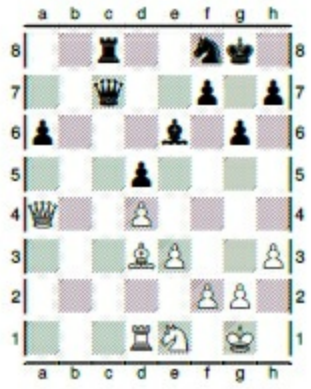


5.11 W

This is what White was waiting for.

27.a4 bxa4 28.Qxa4

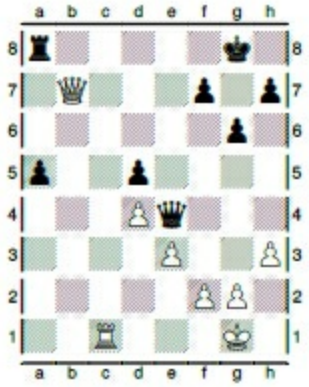
See diagram 5.12, on the next page.



5.12 B

An extra pawn emerges for Black on the queenside, but this pawn is still deep within Black's camp and will require protection, notice that Black's d pawn is isolated and may yet become a target.

28…a5 29.Ra1 Ra8 30.Bb5 Bd7 31.Nd3 Qc3 32.Bxd7 Nxd7 33.Rc1 Qxd3 34.Qxd7 Qe4 35.Qb7



5.13 B

White has utilized Black's weakness on d5 to press against the extra queenside pawn. Black cannot save both pawns.

35…Rd8 36.Qa7 Kg7 37.Qxa5

White reaps his reward.

37…Rb8 38.Qa2 h5 39.Kh2

White must be patient. He has succeeded in containing Black's threats to invade his first and second rank, and now removes his king from the first rank to h2, where it is safe from potential checks, and Black starts to run out of useful moves.

39…Rd8 40.Qb1

White offers a queen exchange to simplify into a rook and pawn ending in which he would be a pawn up, Black wisely declines.

40…Qe6 41.Kg1 h4

5.14 W

Black aims to restrain White's kingside pawns from advancing. Black is a pawn down, but it is not easy for White to capitalize as the only weak point in Black's camp – the d5 pawn, is well defended, but perhaps the pawn on h4 can now be used as a target, White needs to proceed slowly.

42.Qb7 Rd6 43.Qb8 Ra6 44.Qd8 f6

5.15 W

White's attack against the h4 pawn has forced Black into making a concession, he succeeds in defending h4, but it comes at a price – he exposes his king.

45.Rc7+ Kh6 46.Qf8+ Kg5

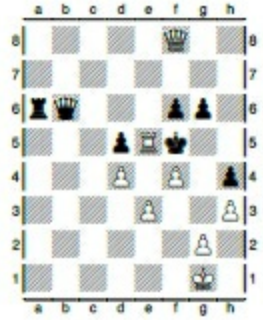
5.16 W

Black’s king has been forced into enemy territory, and stands in peril, especially to an advance of White’s f pawn with check.

47.Re7

And Black resigns.

In attacking Black’s queen White wants to gain access to e5 for his rook, if Black’s queen can be forced away from the protection of this square then White has mate in two, say for example that Black plays 47…Qb6, then White has: 48.f4+ Kf5 and 49.Re5#



Black can’t take the rook with his f pawn as it is pinned against his king.

Instead of playing 48…Kf5, Black could play 48…Kh5, but this too is mate as White has either 49.Rh7# or 49.Qh7#.

Alternatively Black could throw in a check with 47…Ra1+, but this only delays the inevitable: 48.Kh2

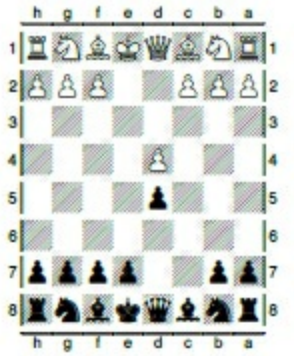
Now Black has to move his queen and allow White's rook access to e5, and 48…Qd6+ is meet by 49.f4+ Kf5, and now 50.Qc8+

Black must give up his queen and still be checkmated. A fine game by White.

Black too can employ the minority attack.

Game three: Benjamin. J Kamsky. Gata Saint Louis 2009

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5

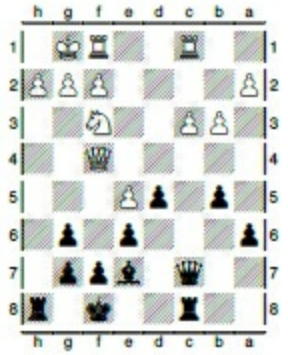


5.17 B

This line of play is from the Exchange Variation of the Caro Kann Defence.

White has a majority of three to two on the queenside, and Black is well placed to put a minority attack into play.

4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 Nf6 6.Bf4 Bg4 7.Qb3 Qc8 8.Nd2 e6 9.Ngf3 Be7 10.Ne5 Bh5 11.Qc2 Nd7 12.0–0 Ndxe5 13.Bxe5 Nxe5 14.dxe5 Bg6 15.Qa4+ Kf8 16.Bxg6 hxg6 17.Nf3 a6 18.Qf4 Qc7 19.Rac1 Rc8 20.b3 b5



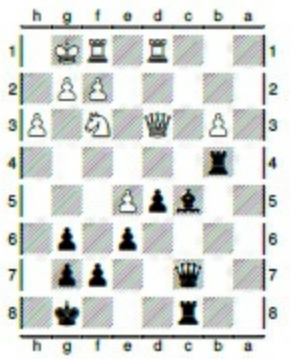
5.18 W

Black has placed his queen and rook in the half open c file and tries to lock White's majority in place with an advance of this b pawn.

21.a4

White challenges Black's grip on the queenside and attempts to mobilize his majority, but he seems to lose patience.

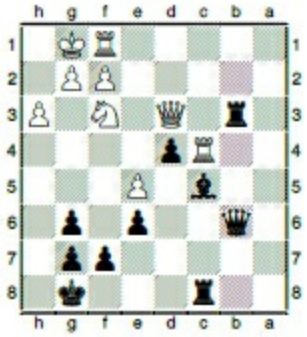
21…Kg8 22.axb5 axb5 23.Qe3 Kh7 24.Nd4 Bc5 25.Rcd1 Kg8 26.h3 Rh4 27.Qd3 b4 28.Nf3 Rf4 29.cxb4 Rxb4



5.19 W

White gets his passed pawn on the queenside, but it’s a weakness, not a strength, the pawn requires defence and presents a target for Black’s pieces.

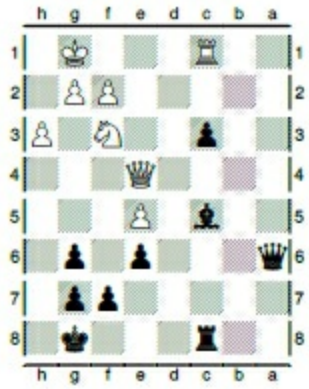
30.Rc1 Qb6 31.Rc3 d4 32.Rc4 Rxb3



5.20 W

Black wins a pawn, but the game is far from over.

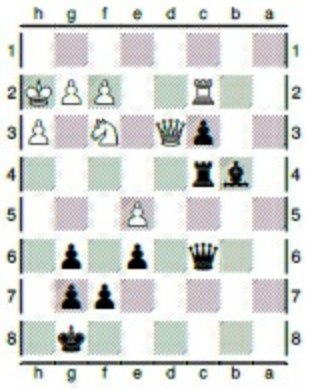
33.Qe4 Rc3 34.Rc1 Qa6 35.R4xc3 dxc3



5.21 W

Now it is Black that has the passed pawn, but the difference is that this pawn is deep within White's camp, on the sixth rank, unlike White's pawn that was deep within his own camp on the third rank. As we have seen in previous examples, the passed pawn becomes the crux of the matter. If Black can advance it, then ultimately it will queen and win the game. Alternatively if White can blockade it and win it, then White can most probably get a draw.

36.Rc2 Be7 37.Kh2 Rc4 38.Qd3 Qc8 39.Qe3 Qc7 40.Qd3 Qc6 41.Qe3 Bb4 42.Qd3



5.22 B

White is happy to maintain a blockade and hold the line. Black must take action to lift the blockade, and further the progress of his passed pawn on c3.

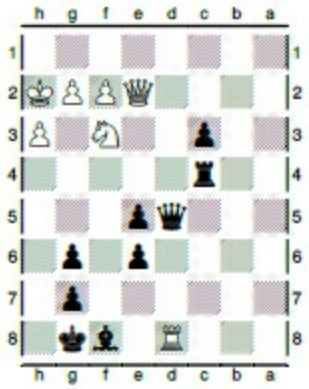
42…Qd5 43.Qe2 f6

White is running out of options, and feels obliged to lift the blockade.

44.Ra2

If instead White tries to preserve the blockade and man the fort with 44.Qe3, then Black has 44…fxe5, and he can then roll the e pawn forward hitting the knight on f3. Taking on e5 with 45.Nxe5, hangs the knight to 45… Re4; but White gambles on a counterattack and tactical play.

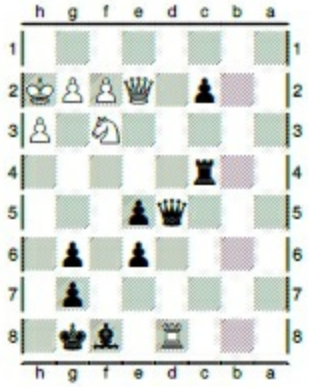
44…fxe5 45.Ra8+ Bf8 46.Rd8



5.23 B

This is White's big hope, if 46…Qxd8 then 47.Qc4, and he will pick up Black's powerful passed pawn on c3, and he has very good drawing chances against Black's doubled pawns, but Black is not forced to comply with White's plan.

46…c2



5.24 W

Black sticks doggedly to his guns. The passed pawn cannot be stopped without White giving up his queen, Black surrenders his queen for only two moves.

47.Rxd5 exd5 48.Qxe5 c1Q 49.Qxd5+ Kh8 50.Ne5 Qf4+

White’s position is hopeless and he resigns.

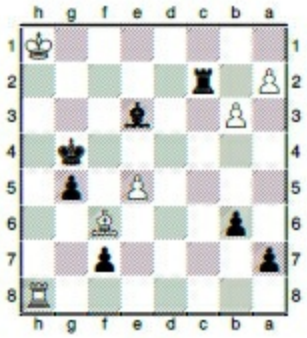
EXERCISES

When you are playing a league or tournament game there is no one stood beside you telling you what to do. There won't be anybody pointing out that you have tactical play available at this or that point in time. You must decide what to do; all the decisions are yours to make. There might be instances where there is rich tactical play, or other occasions when you have to hunker down in a quiet position and carve out a plan.

The following exercises are for you to sort out on your own. You are in the driving seat, no body is with you, and it's all up to you.

I will put my observations at the end of the section, in exercise solutions.

1… (Black to move)

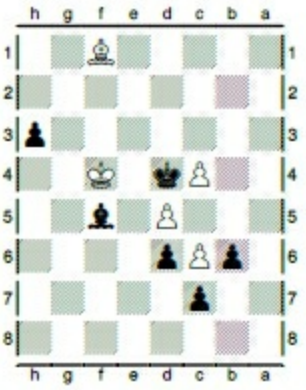


1.1 B

1. (White to move)

1.2 W

1…



1.3 B

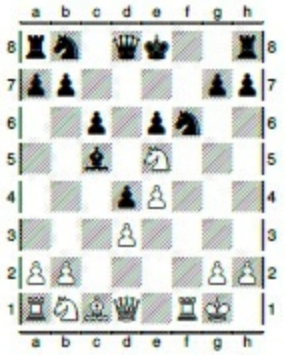
1…

1.4 B

1.

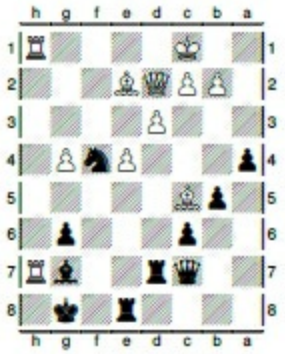
1.5 W

1.



1.6 W

1…



1.7 B

1…

1. 8 B

1…

1.9 B

1.10,1.

1.10 W

Solutions to Exercises

1.1,1...

1.1 B

All the clues are here.

White's king has no flight squares. Black's rook cuts off the second rank, and his bishop controls g1. Black needs that all-important check that hammers home the final nail in White's coffin; but any rook check lets the White king out of jail. Black needs to maintain the fences around White's king and free his rook to give a decisive check.

Black plays 1…Kg3.

Black's king controls the flight squares in front of White's king, his rook is free for regicidal duties.

White can only avoid checkmate by giving up his rook, and this only serves to delay the inevitable.

It's simple straightforward stuff. The big huff and puff of the glory seeking sacrifice is not always necessary, whilst looking for the fantastic don't neglect the simple.

1.2, 1.

1.2 W

The big sign here is the undefended Black rook on c5.

Undefended pieces should set tactical alarm bells ringing in your head.

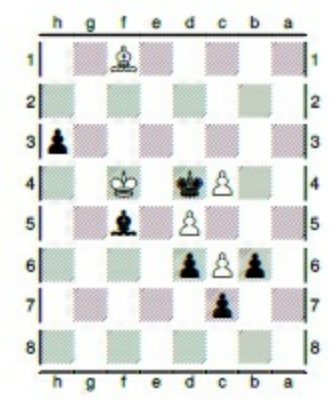
Can White exploit the undefended rook on c5?

Are there any forcing moves available?

White has a rook check on f7, this more or less compels Black to recapture on f7 with his king, thus pulling the king to another square on which White can give a check with dxe6+, the line to Black's rook on c5 is opened, and it is attacked by the White rook on e5, and as we know – everything stops for check. Black's king must get out of check after which White takes off Black's rook on c5, getting his sacrificed materiel back, and White nets a pawn into the bargain, leaving him two pawns up in a rook and pawn ending, advantage White.

White plays 1.Rxf7+ Kxf7 2.dxe6+ Ke7 3.Rxc4. Kxe6.

1.3,1…



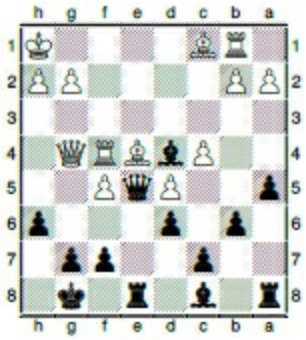
1.3 B

Black has an advantage. The passed pawn in the h file is the jewel in his crown, allowing him to leave the bishop on f5 up for grabs.

Black plays 1...h2, this forces White's response- 2.Bg2, White dare not take the bishop with 2.Kxf5 as Black promotes on the next move and has an easy win.

Black is now free to start attacking White pawns on the queenside with 2...Bd3, an easy win for Black.

1.4, 1…



1.4 B

White has a glaring weakness on his first rank, all that Black needs to do is force open the e file and his major pieces can invade on e1 with a quick mate.

Can Black bludgeon the White bishop away from the e file, or at least

exploit White’s first rank vulnerability?

Black plays 1…Bxf5.

This has to be calculated carefully. White has three responses.

A, 2.Bxf5 gives Black mate in two: 2…Qe1+ 3.Rf1 Qxf1 mate.

B, 2.Rxf5 in which case 2…Qxe4 and after 3.Qxe4 Rxe4 Black emerges a pawn up.

C, 2.Qxf5 Qxf5 3.Rxf5 Rxe4.

In all lines Black wins at least a pawn.

1.5,1.

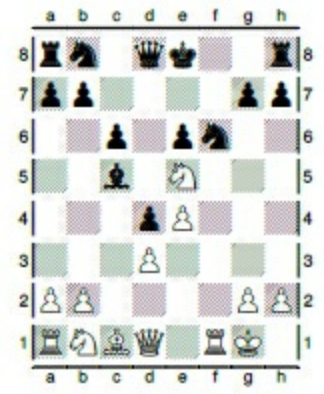
1.5 W

Black offers an exchange of queens, but only the knight on f6 supports Black’s queen.

White plays 1.Rxf6.

Black’s queen on h5 is enprise, he must play 1…Qxe2, or find a safe square for his queen, but that drops a piece since he has not recaptured the knight on f6, so Black plays 1…Qxe2, and desperately hopes for 2.Nxe2, but White has 2.Rxf8+, and after Black recaptures on f8 White plays 3.Nxe2 and emerges a piece up.

1.6,1.



1.6 W

White has excellent open lines for his rook on f1 and the queen on d1, and Black has an undefended bishop on c5. Can White benefit from the open lines and the undefended bishop on c5?

White plays 1.Nf7

Since the White knight forks the queen and rook, Black is obliged to capture the knight with his king:

1…Kxf7

This creates a pin against the knight on f6, and White is able to get his materiel back with

2.e5 Nbd7 3.exf6

White gets his materiel back.

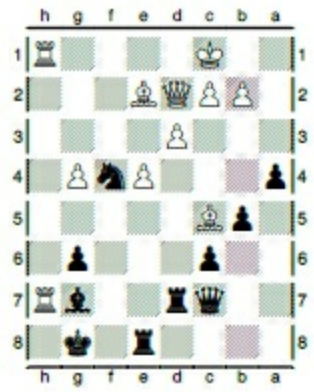
3…Nxf6

But the knight is pinned against the king, and the bishop on c5 is loose.

4.Qh5+

White picks up the bishop on c5.

1.7,1…



1.7 B

Black’s rook and queen on his second rank have a potential double attack against White’s rook on h7, can Black benefit from this?

Black plays 1…Nxe2+

It’s important to take the bishop first in this sequence.

White recaptures.

2.Qxe2 Bxb2+

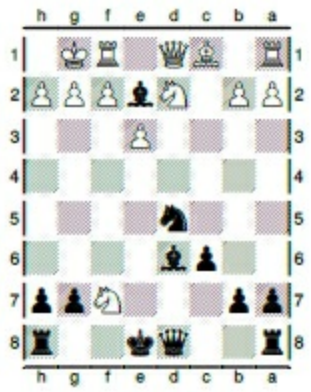
Everything stops for check.

3.Kxb2 Rxh7 4.Rxh7 Qxh7.

Black gets his pawn back and wins the exchange, advantage Black.

Note, had Black played 1…Bxb2+? Then at the end of this sequence his knight on f4 would be hanging to the White queen.

1.8,1…



1. 8 B

Here we have a situation where both sides have their queen under attack.

White is a pawn up on this deal. He has calculated that if 1…Kxf7, then he has 2.Qxe2, and he emerges a pawn up, and the Black king has forfeited castling rights, and is exposed, White is better.

Alternatively Black can play 1…Bxd1, in which case White has 2.Nxd8, and if 2…Rxd8 then 3.Rxd1, White is still a pawn to the good.

And if Black plays 1…Bxd1 2.Nxd8 and Black keeps his bishop on board with say 2…Ba4, then White also keeps his minor piece but wins a second pawn with 3.Nxb7, and gains a tempo against Black's bishop on d6.

White thinks he has considered all options, but has he overlooked anything?

Can Black prove him wrong, and demonstrate a fatal flaw in White's thinking?

Black plays 1…Bxh2+

Consider the move that smites.

White failed to take this check into consideration, a fatal flaw in his thinking.

If White takes the bishop with

2.Kxh2

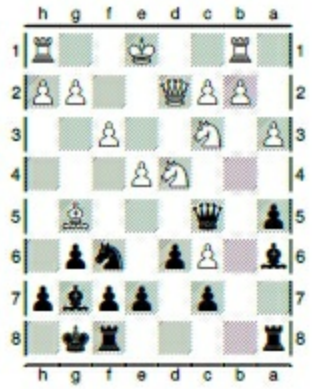
Then Black gives a queen check on h4

2…Qh4+

Critically Black has removed his queen from attack whereas White's queen is still attacked, and after White moves his king then Black picks up the White queen on d1.

Alternatively White can meet the bishop check with 2.Kh1, but this doesn't save White as Black still plays 2…Qh4, threatening a discovery with mate to follow, and in the meantime White's queen is still attacked.

1.9,1…



1.9 B

White's knight on d4 enjoys the support of the queen on d2. Can Black demonstrate that the d4 knight is under-defended?

Black plays 1…Nxe4.

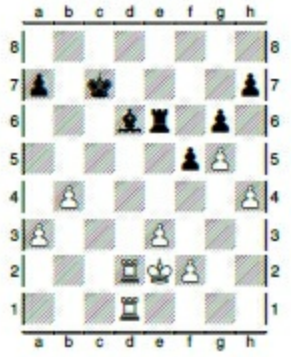
Black takes a pawn and into the bargain he attacks White's queen with his knight on e4 and unleashes a double attack against the White knight on d4 which is now attacked by the bishop on g7 as well as the queen on c5.

White might think that he can get the pawn back as he is attacking the pawn on e7, but this doesn't work:

2.Nxe4 Qxd4 3.Qxd4 Bxd4 4.Bxe7 Rfe8

And after the bishop moves - say 5.Bh4, Black plays 5…f5 trapping the knight against the king and winning the knight for a pawn.

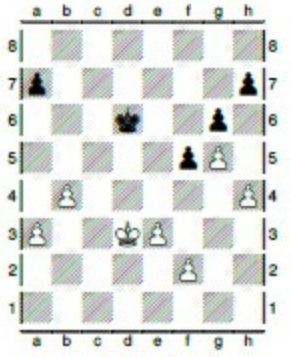
1.10,1.



1.10 W

The key to this lies in White's extra pawns. White has an extra pawn in the centre, and a two to one advantage on the queenside. White is also the exchange up. Given his strength in numbers White gives back the exchange to simplify and to arrive at a won king and pawn endgame.

White plays 1.Rxd6 Rxd6 2.Rxd6 Kxd6 3.Kd3



1.11 B

White has an overwhelming advantage.

Black’s few options allow him 3...Ke5, 3...Kd5, or 3...a6.

After any of these options by Black, it just becomes a matter of technique for White.

To view a possible line of play, let’s give Black 3...Ke5 4.f3 Kd5.

White can play 5.f4, 5,a4, or 5.Kc3, all roads lead to victory.

ANALYTICAL EXERCISES

In the following exercise we feature six games. Initially the games are provided with out comment. As you play through each game, you must try to find the mistake/s that lead to the downfall of the defeated player, and demonstrate how the victor exploited the mistakes of his opponent, and thereby obtained victory.

Be objective but critical. Look at every move and weigh it in full measure. Ask – what does this move do? What is the value of this move? How does the move just made contribute towards the overall scheme of things? Was the move played good, bad or indifferent? And mark each move accordingly.

However, having marked a move with say a?, or a?!, then state in writing why this move warrants the mark that you have assigned to it, and suggest an alternative, stating why your recommendation is better.

What you have to look for is the critical moments. What were the salient aspects that determined the game? At what point did it become apparent that one side or the other was better, and why? What was going on in the respective minds of each player when they made their moves?

Be prepared to give this exercise some time and write down your observations. State what you think is going on in each game, this is something that you might like to repeat using your own games.

My take on what happened is provided in the solutions section below, but our views of what happened may differ.

It is often said that we learn from our mistakes. The games featured in this section are all taken from my own experience, and all but one is a ten minuet rapid play game on the internet, mistakes are, therefore, more abundant.

However, these games provide the opportunity to learn from the mistakes of other people. The mistakes featured in these games commonly appear in amateur games. Noting the nature and type of errors that tend to manifest themselves on a regular basis is intended to be constructive; and it is hoped that in viewing these mistakes that you will be forearmed, and thus you will avoid the common pitfalls that trip up many a beginner.

I have provided a format for examining these games, but it's not compulsory. After each game I ask – What happened in this game? This is designed to provoke a discussion. At the end of the game I ask – Why did Black / White lose this game? This invites a summary, and an opportunity to again pinpoint the main errors, thus reinforcing the learning process. There is also an opportunity to make other worthwhile comments after the game.

Games for Analysis

I would recommend you play through the games with the winning pieces.

Game one:A. N. Other S.E Internet 2021

1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 c6 3.e3 Bf5 4.Bd2 Nf6 5.Be2 Nbd7 6.Nc3 Qc7 7.h3 h6 8.a3 e5 9.dxe5 Nxe5 10.Nxe5 Qxe5 11.f4 Qe6 12.g4 Bh7 13.f5 Qe5 14.Kf2 Bc5 15.b4 Bd6 16.Qg1 0–0–0 17.Bf3 Rde8 18.Re1 d4 19.Nd1 Ne4+ 20.Bxe4 Qxe4 21.exd4 Qxd4+ 22.Be3 Qc4 23.c3 g6 24.Bd4 Qa2+ 25.Kf3 Rhg8 26.Rxe8+ Rxe8 27.fxg6 Qe2# 0–1

Game two:S.EA. N. OtherInternet 2021

1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 Bf5 4.c4 e6 5.Qb3 Bxb1 6.Rxb1 b6 7.cxd5 Qxd5 8.Bc4 Qd7 9.0–0 a6 10.Ne5 Qe7 11.e4 Nxe4 12.d5 Nc5 13.Qf3 Nbd7 14.dxe6 Nxe5 15.exf7+ Kd7 16.Rd1+ Ned3 17.Qxa8 Qf6 18.Be3 Qh4 19.Qd5+ Bd6 20.g3 Qh3 21.Bxd3 c6 22.Bf5+ Qxf5 23.Qxf5+ Kc7 24.b4 Nd7 25.Qd3 Rf8 26.Qxd6+ Kb7 27.Qxd7+ Ka8 28.Qe8+ Rxe8 29.fxe8Q+ Kb7 30.Rbc1 30.Rd7# 1–0

Game three:S.EA. N. OtherInternet2021

1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 c6 3.e3 e6 4.Bd3 b6 5.Nbd2 Be7 6.Qe2 Nf6 7.0–0 0–0 8.e4

dxe4 9.Nxe4 Nxe4 10.Qxe4 f5 11.Qe2 h6 12.Bc4 Rf6 13.c3 b5 14.Bb3 a5 15.a3 a4 16.Ba2 Nd7 17.Bxe6+ Kh8 18.Re1 Bd6 19.Bd2 Qc7 20.h3 Bb7 21.Ba2 Nb6 22.Rad1 c5 23.dxc5 Bxc5 24.Be3 Re8 25.Qxb5 Bxe3 26.Qxe8+ Kh7 27.Bg8+ Kh8 28.Bf7+ Kh7 29.Qg8# 1-0

Game four:A. N. OtherS.EInternet2021

1.e4 d6 2.Bc4 Nf6 3.d3 c6 4.a3 d5 5.exd5 cxd5 6.Ba2 Nc6 7.Ne2 Bf5 8.0–0 e6 9.Ng3 Bg6 10.f4 h5 11.f5 Qb6+ 12.Kh1 h4 13.fxg6 hxg3 14.gxf7+ Kxf7 15.h3 Kg8 16.Qf3 Bd6 17.b4 Rf8 18.Be3 Qc7 19.Qe2 Ne5 20.Nd2 Nfg4 21.Rxf8+ Kxf8 22.Qf1+ Kg8 23.Bf4 Nf2+ 24.Kg1 Qb6 25.Bxg3 Nxh3+ 26.Kh2 Nf4+ 27.Bh4 Rxh4+ 28.Kg3 g5 29.Nf3 Rg4+ 30.Kh2 Rxg2+ 31.Kh1 Ng4 32.Re1 Nf2+ 33.Qxf2 Qxf2 0–1

Game five:S.EHunt L. WRhyl2004

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nd4 4.Nxd4 cxd4 5.0–0 a6 6.Ba4 b5 7.Bb3 e6 8.d3 g6 9.f4 Bg7 10.Nd2 Ne7 11.Nf3 0–0 12.Qe2 Bb7 13.Qf2 Nc6 [13...Qb6] 14.a3 Rc8 15.Bd2 d6 16.Rac1 Kh8 17.Kh1 a5 18.f5 exf5 19.exf5 Ne7 B on b7 is now very active 20.Ng5 Nxf5 21.Nxf7+ Rxf7 22.Bxf7 Nh4 23.Rg1 Rc5 24.Bxa5 Qa8? 25.Qxh4 Rc8 26.Bxg6 h6 27.Bd2 1–0

Game six:S.EA. N. OtherInternet2021

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c3 d5 3.d3 g6 4.Nbd2 Bg7 5.e4 dxe4 6.dxe4 Nc6 7.Bc4 e5 8.0–0 0–0 9.Qc2 a6 10.h3 b5 11.Be2 Bb7 12.Rd1 Qe7 13.Nf1 h6 14.Be3 g5 15.Ng3 Bc8 16.b4 Rd8 17.a3 Be6 18.c4 Na7 19.cxb5 axb5 20.Rac1 c6 21.Bc5 Qb7 22.Nxe5 Ne8 23.Ng4 Rd7 24.Nf5 Bxf5 25.exf5 Rad8 26.Rxd7 Rxd7 27.Bf3 Nd6 28.Bxa7 Qxa7 29.Qxc6 Nc4 30.Re1 Rd2 31.f6 Bf8 32.Re8 h5 33.Rxf8+ Kxf8 34.Qc8+ Rd8 35.Qxd8#. 1-0

Solutions to Analytical Exercise:

Game one:A. N. Other S.E Internet 2021

Here are my observations:

1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 c6 3.e3!? Bf5 4.Bd2? Nf6 5.Be2? Nbd7 6.Nc3? Qc7!? 7.h3?!* h6 8.a3?!***** e5 9.dxe5 Nxe5 10.Nxe5? Qxe5 11.f4? Qe6 12.g4? Bh7 13.f5? Qe5 14.Kf2 Bc5 15.b4 Bd6 16.Qg1 0–0–0 17.Bf3 Rde8 18.Re1 d4 19.Nd1 Ne4+ 20.Bxe4 Qxe4 21.exd4?! Qxd4+!? 22.Be3 Qc4 23.c3 g6 24.Bd4 Qa2+ 25.Kf3 Rhg8 26.Rxe8+ Rxe8 27.fxg6?? Qe2# 0–1

What happened in this game?

White’s problems begin in the opening.

To gain a deeper understanding we need to probe the first six moves and attempt to get into White’s mind set, and see what he was thinking off when playing these early moves.

1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 c6 3.e3!?

1.1 B

At this point White’s position is fine; he is playing a system known as the Colle; at first glance the move 3.e3!? Looks somewhat odd, and needs

explaining.

The good points behind this move are that the e3 pawn lends solid defence to the White's central pawn on d4, and advancing the e pawn opens a diagonal for White's bishop on f1, which allows White to feed this bishop into the game, hopefully on the central d3 square; this is a prime strategic plank of White's opening system. On d3 the bishop improves its scope and has a direct bearing in the centre as it influences the e4 square and provides an option for White to expand in the centre at a later stage with e3 – e4. Developing the f1 bishop also furthers White's kingside development and prepares kingside castling.

The questionable point, however, is that advancing the e pawn to e3 shuts in White's bishop on c1, this appears to be counter productive. Why would White voluntarily close down this diagonal for his bishop? Surely White would be better served by getting the c1 bishop outside of the pawn chain first with 3.Bf4.

Indeed White could play this line (3.Bf4), in which case we have a London system, but the drawback to White's choice is that the b2 pawn is denied the protection of the bishop and Black could immediately exploit this with 3...Qb6.

It is important at this early stage in the game to understand the aims of the opening system that White is adopting. Had White wanted to play a London System, then the consensus is that 2.Bf4 is best. White's 2.Nf3 is not necessary in the London, and can be a drawback in this particular System.

So, 3.e3!?, although it has a dubious element, is all part and parcel of a particular opening system that White has chosen to play.

3...Bf5 4.Bd2?

On d2 the bishop is doing nothing of any value, ok the bishop extends its scope, but there is no real promise of any activity on the e1 – a5 diagonal, and the bishop has abandoned the defence of the b2 pawn which allows Black to hit this pawn immediately with 4...Qb6.

White's bishop on d2 is misplaced, and is an entirely inappropriate response to 3...Bf5.

White could, however, try to make sense of 4.Bd2 if he plays 5.c4, 6.Nc3 and then 7.Rc1, after which he could claim that 4.Bd2 is justifiable as he has gained early access to the c file for his rook, but White would still have to deal with a possible 4...Qb6, which cuts across his ideas.

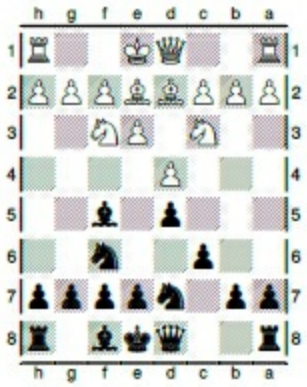
It is possible that Black's 3...Bf5, spooked White as this move cuts across the prime aim of White developing his bishop to the d3 square. White should not be phased by this, and should have a ready made back up plan in place, 4.c4, for example, is good idea for White, alternatively he can play 4.Bd3, and if Black exchanges on d3 White can recapture on d3 with either 5.cxd3 or 5.Qxd3, both of which offer White reasonable play. However, it would seem that 4.Bd2 was a knee-jerk reaction to being denied the major strategic goal of placing the f1 bishop on d3.

4...Nf6 5.Be2?

Developing the bishop to e2 on move five is a passive means of deploying the bishop. White could still continue with 5.c4, in which case 5...Qb6, could be met by 6.Qb3, but White is keen to develop this kingside piece and not wanting to deploy it on d3 he opts for a less effective role for the f1 bishop, but at least White can now bring his king to safety by castling and he will have completed his kingside development.

5...Nbd7 6.Nc3?

This is the last of White's mistakes within the first six moves.



1.2 B

Although on c3 the knight is developed to its best square it blocks in the c pawn. White needs to advance this pawn to actively contest Black's centre, this option is now denied to White, and the knight on c3 has no effective scope and no real means of contributing to the struggle, so why play it? White selected this square for the knight because it is said to be optimally placed on c3, and he furthers his development.

We can observe that in the first six moves White has made a catalogue of imprecise decisions and that he lacks any clear opening plan. Consequently White's position is somewhat disjointed and passive.

The misplacement of one piece could be described as an inaccuracy, however, such a misplaced piece may be brought back into the fold at a latter point, after which it can rejoin the struggle as a more relevant player; but White is not faced with the prospect of improving just one poorly placed piece but three; this becomes a major task and handicaps White putting him at a disadvantage.

The consequences of this type of mistake do not necessarily have an immediate impact, but it will adversely affect White in the future. A point worth bearing in mind is the following: one inaccuracy is not likely to cost the game, but several inaccuracies probably will.

6...Qc7!?

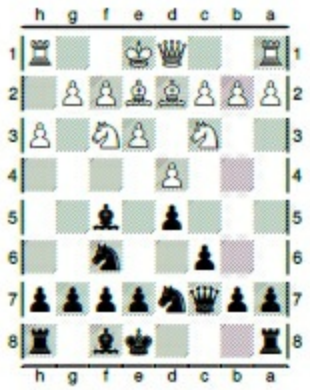
Black's 6...Qc7!?, warrants attention since it leaves his bishop on f5 out on a limb. Black has played 6...Qc7!?, in order to advance his e pawn to e5,

and thereby to obtain a greater influence in the centre, but the f5 bishop is vulnerable to a hit from White's knight coming to h4. More prudent on Black's part would have been

6...h6, creating a bolt hole for the bishop on f5.

Let's move on to the next highlighted faults:

7.h3?!*



1.3 B

When I first saw this move I considered it to be dubious, since White has the option of furthering his development and bringing his king to safety with 7.0-0, but upon deeper consideration 7.h3 seems to be a sensible waiting move. White delays immediate castling in order to get Black to revel more of his hand and see if Black intends to castle long. White still retains the option of castling and in the meantime, 7.h3 is not a damaging move to his position.

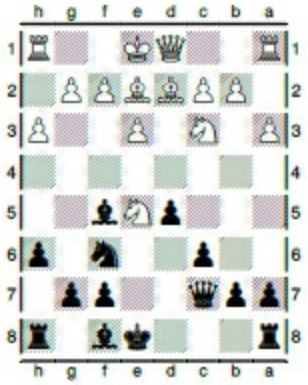
7...h6 8.a3?!*

Likewise with this move. I felt initially that White was just wasting time and failing to attend to his development with 8.0-0, but this move (8.a3) is also a waiting move. White continues to play in a cautious non-committal fashion - still inviting Black to show his intentions regarding what side of the board he is going to castle on; if Black goes long then White has a possible pawn storm in the making against Black's king in the shape of 9.b4.

The downside to White's last two moves, however, lies in failing to

develop with castling, but this is nitpicking on my part, and I would consider withdrawing my criticism of 7.h3 and 8.a3 as dubious moves; but I let the marks stand in case you too felt they were dubious.

8...e5 9.dxe5 Nxe5 10.Nxe5?



1.4 B

This exchange is totally un-necessary. Black's recapture on e5 with his queen improves the standing of this piece as the Black queen is now centralised and on the same file as White's king, this constitutes an improvement for Black. White had better options in either 10.0-0, or 10.Nd4, hitting Black's bishop on f5, and centralising his knight.

10...Qxe5 11.f4?

White wants to make capital of his ability to strike a blow against the Black queen, but this is just a cheap hit on White's part. Black's queen can move backwards, whereas White's pawn cannot. White has now created significant weaknesses in his own position. He has a backward pawn on e3, which is on an open file in front of his king, he has dark squared holes on the e1 – h4 diagonal, and there is no cohesion in the pieces that are developed. Castling was a better choice for White.

12.g4?

Lashing out with a pawn yet again to get a quick and cheap hit on Black's bishop on f5, repeating the nature of his last mistake. Black's bishop can flee, but White's pawn can never move back a square. White has

overextended on the kingside and his king is in danger of becoming exposed, 12.0-0, was the better move for White.

12...Bh7 13.f5?

Three mistakes in row, and all three of the same type. White continues to lash out at Black's pieces at the expense of creating catastrophic weaknesses in his kingside. On f4 the pawn at least presented a barrier on the dark squares, but advancing to f5 lifts the dark square blockade, and propels Black's queen back to the central e5 square, gifting Black's queen an open diagonal on the h2 – b8 line; this diagonal is an open wound in White's side. Black can bring the queen into g3 with check, but the worst thing of all, from White's prospective, is that it's a self-inflicted wound. Castling remained White's best move.

Over the space of just three moves White has ruined his position. Critical mistakes have been made, and the damage is done. White has little option but to bring his king up the board to f2 to guard the g3 square, his king is dangerously exposed; his kingside is overextended, he has significant weaknesses. Consider the position after the next two moves:

13...Qe5 14.Kf2

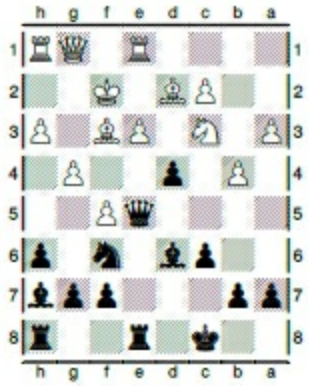
1.5 B

Look at White's misplaced pieces: the knight on c3, the bishop on d2 and the bishop on e2. What potential do they have? What scope do they have? All three are largely ineffective.

Black, by contrast, can bring his bishop to d6 or c5, and decide what side of the board to castle on, probably the queenside. Black has only one problem child – the light-squared bishop, and he can get this piece into the game with either ...g6 or ...h5. At this point in time I would say that White is all but lost.

Over the next five moves Black completes development; all he has to do next is to find the most effective means of opening the position and getting at the White king.

14...Bc5 15.b4 Bd6 16.Qg1 0–0–0 17.Bf3 Rde8 18.Re1 d4, see diagram 1.6.



1.6 W

19.Nd1

White tries to keep the position closed, but to no avail. Black continues to make inroads by opening lines of attack against White's king.

19...Ne4+ 20.Bxe4 Qxe4 21.exd4?!

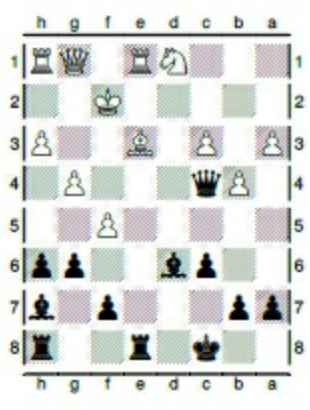
This only serves to open the game up which is better for Black than White.

21...Qxd4+!?

Engines prefer 21...Qxc2, but White remains a very poor second best after

the text move.

22.Be3 Qc4 23.c3 g6



1.7 W

Black looks to bring the passive bishop on h7 into the game. He also needs to feed his rook on h8 into the fray; irrelevant at this stage is 24.Bxa7 or 24.Bxh6.

24.Bd4 Qa2+ 25.Kf3 Rhg8 26.Rxe8+ Rxe8 27.fxg6??

Eventually White goes horrendously wrong and overlooks a mate in one, unless this was his way of resigning.

27...Qe2# 0–1

Why did White lose this game?

The aimless placement of three minor pieces by White in the opening was a contributory factor in White's loss, but this opens the lid on a number of other aspects. White seemed happy to play a Colle, but when his prime strategic aim of playing his bishop to d3 was challenged by Black's 3...Bf5, White had no effective fall back plan, this demonstrates a concerning lack of knowledge and familiarity with the opening system of his choice.

At a more basic level was a disturbing lack of any real plan in the opening phase. White was simply bringing his pieces off the first rank with a policy of development for development's sake. The bishop on d2 had no real

purpose, the bishop on e2 was a passive bystander and the knight on c3 had no effective scope and blocked in the c pawn.

White could have played 4.b3, with the intention of deploying his dark-squared bishop to b2, this he could have followed with 5.c4 and 6.Nc3; in which case he would be adopting a Colle Zukertort System, but he had no strategy and lacked an appreciation of effective and meaningful opening play.

This initial misplacement of pieces can be viewed as inaccuracies on White's part, and although inconvenient, they were not the prime reason for White's demise.

The main reason for White's loss was his folly in advancing pawns to hit his opponent's pieces. The reckless advance of the e pawn, followed by the g and f pawns left White with ruinous weaknesses on his kingside, an exposed king and virtually a lost game.

At a deeper level, we need to ask why White made these rash pawn pushes. The answer revels a lack of understanding, and a lack of any sense of danger.

What lessons can we learn from this game?

One: know your opening. Spend some time looking at the opening of your choice. Play through some master games with this opening; get to know the prime aims of the opening that you want to play.

Two: don't panic if things don't go exactly as you planned, have a fall back plan.

Three: develop pieces with a purpose, don't just aimlessly deploy your resources in a negative haphazard fashion.

Four:and this is the most important point, be very, very careful about utilising your opponent's pieces as targets for your pawns. Pawns, once advanced, can never be moved back. The advancing pawns can leave horrendous gaps in your defences and create holes and other weaknesses that can never be plugged.

Other comments worth making:

White's play was lacking.

In general terms White lacked a number of essential components, these are as follows:

Opening knowledge, effective piece deployment and co-operation, cohesion, order, basic understanding and planning. The presence of any one of these factors could be a game losing aspect, but the combined attendance of all of them is a guaranteed recipe for defeat.

Game two:S.EA. N. OtherInternet2021

Here are my observations:

1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 Bf5 4.c4 e6 5.Qb3 Bxb1? 6.Rxb1 b6? 7.cxd5 Qxd5? 8.Bc4 Qd7? 9.0–0 a6? 10.Ne5 Qe7? 11.e4! Nxe4? 12.d5 Nc5 13.Qf3 Nbd7?? 14.dxe6 Nxe5 15.exf7+ Kd7 16.Rd1+ Ned3 17.Qxa8 Qf6 18.Be3 Qh4 19.Qd5+ Bd6 20.g3 Qh3 21.Bxd3 c6?? 22.Bf5+ Qxf5 23.Qxf5+ Kc7 24.b4 Nd7 25.Qd3 Rf8 26.Qxd6+ Kb7 27.Qxd7+ Ka8 28.Qe8+ Rxe8 29.fxe8Q+ Kb7 30.Rd7 # 1–0

What happened in this game? Black ran into problems in the opening.

1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 Bf5 4.c4 e6 5.Qb3

The opening is basically a Colle, but Black snatches the important b1 – h7 diagonal with 3...Bf5, and White responds by attacking Black's centre with 4.c4. Black defends his centre with 4...e6 and White hits the weakened b7 pawn with 5.Qb3.

2.1 B

Up to this point things are fine in the Black camp, and providing Black knows his opening then this line should not cause him undue concern, but he seems to fly into panic mode, and embarks on a steep downward spiral of mistake after mistake.

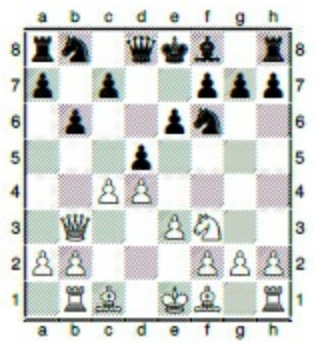
5...Bxb1?

Why play this? Black has side-stepped the main issue – White's attack against his undefended pawn on b7, eventually Black must address this threat, but Black first exchanges his bishop on f5 for White's knight.

Black's bishop on f5 was a great piece; it could even be argued that it was a vital piece, so why exchange it for one of White's pieces that hasn't even moved? This is, after all, Black's light-squared bishop that he's trading off, he wont get another one; after this exchange White can deploy his light-squared bishop on the important b1 – h7 diagonal, and it will be totally un-opposed. Although Black has a clump of pawns in the centre on light squares he could suffer a long-term white-squared weaknesses, it looks like Black is guilty of adopting an exchange on sight policy. This is a common mistake that beginners make. The beginner often aims to exchange all the pieces and head for a harmless draw, not to be recommended.

Had Black spent some time at home looking into this opening prior to playing it over the board then he would probably have discovered 5...Nc6, when the 'threat' to take on b7 is not in White's favour: 5...Nc6 6.Qxb7 Nb4 7.Na3 Rb8 8.Qxa7 Ra8 9.Qb7 Rxa3 10.bxa3 Nc2, this isn't worth White's time.

6.Rxb1 b6?



2.2 W

This opens up light squared weaknesses on Black's queenside, 6...Qc8 was better, but now Black has tell-tale little pin prick holes on a6 and c6, whilst the a4 – e8 diagonal looks suspect as does the h1 – a8 diagonal; all due to Black's own actions!

7.cxd5

White is keen to open lines for his f1 bishop, and he can quickly place a

rook on the now half open c file.

7...Qxd5?

Black had three ways to recapture on d5, only one of which was good – 7...exd5.

The queen on d5 is a great target for White's bishop and Black will lose time having to move his queen a second time, furthermore, making a target of his queen actively assists White's development.

8.Bc4 Qd7?

Where is Black's b8 knight going?

8...Qd8 or 8...Qb7 was better. Note: 8...Qe4, or 8...Qf5 hitting White's rook on b1 is harmless: 8...Qe4 9.Bd3 Qd5 10.Qa4+ Nbd7 11.0–0, and White is better; also possible for White was 9.0-0: 8...Qe4 9.0-0 Qxb1 10.Bd3 Qa1 11.e4 c6 12.Bd2 Qxf1+ 13.Kxf1, White is better.

9.0–0

White could have opted for 9.Ne5.

9...a6?

This was unnecessary, but understandable as Black wants to make sure that White's bishop can't get access to b5, but he panicked, it was possible for him to develop with 9...Bd6, after which he had good chances of completing his kingside development with 10...0-0. The opening is for developing pieces to their best squares.

10.Ne5 Qe7?

2.3 W

Black causes a traffic jam in his own ranks. The queen on e7 blocks the f8 bishop. The only way to develop this pieces is the time consuming ...g6, ...Bg7 and then
...0-0, so Black's king is going to be marooned in the centre for at least three moves.

Meanwhile, White enjoys a lead in development, so he has to ask himself what is the nature of his advantage, and the answer lies in Black's weaknesses. Black has got himself into a tangle on the kingside, meaning it will be some time before he can castle, there are numerous light squared weaknesses in his camp, and in particular his rook on a8 looks very vulnerable, and if Black's king is stuck in the centre then White would profit from opening lines in the centre.

11.e4!

White offers a pawn.
11...Nxe4?

This is a luxury that Black simply cannot afford, he has to develop at top speed, probably 11...g6 was best for Black.

12.d5

White continues to open lines against the Black king.

12...Nc5 13.Qf3 Nbd7??

This leads to a loss of materiel, and it's so transparent. Black's rook on a8 is forfeit.

13...Ra7 was better, but after the text move (13...Nbd7??) Black is lost.

14.dxe6 Nxe5

This isn't really a sacrifice as White is going to pick up the a8 rook.

15.exf7+ Kd7 16.Rd1+

Bringing another piece into play.

16...Ned3 17.Qxa8 Qf6 18.Be3

This completes White's development. White has an overwhelming advantage at this point.

However, White overlooked a forced mate in seven:

18.Qe8+ Kd6 19.Bf4+ Qxf4 20.Rxd3+ Nxd3 21.Qe6+ Kc5 22.Qd5+ Kb4 23.a3+ Ka4 24.Bb3#. Dead easy if you're a computer.

18...Qh4

Black is just going through the motions.

19.Qd5+

Overlooking a mate in three with 19.Qe8+

19...Bd6 20.g3 Qh3 21.Bxd3 c6??

Oh dear!
22.Bf5+ Qxf5 23.Qxf5+

Black can give up now, but he plays on, hope springs eternal.

23...Kc7 24.b4 Nd7 25.Qd3 Rf8

Why prolong the suffering?

26.Qxd6+ Kb7 27.Qxd7+ Ka8 28.Qe8+ Rxe8 29.fxe8Q+ Kb7 30.Rd7 1–0

Why did Black lose this game?

Black went catastrophically wrong in the opening, making mistake after mistake, and allowing White to gain the upper hand. White takes advantage of Black's congested kingside and his lag in development by making a bid to open the centre with 11.e4. Black errors yet again by grabbing the pawn (11...Nxe4?); this wasted precious time that Black could have used for development. White continues with his plan of opening the centre when Black again ignores his kingside development for the sake of a cheap shot against White's queen (12...Nc5) this again wastes valuable time which could have been used to develop his kingside, and succeeds in propelling White's queen to a good attacking diagonal.

Black makes a further error, on move thirteen – 13...Nbd7??; this loses the exchange and White obtains the opportunity to force the Black king into an exposed position in the centre of the board.

White further capitalised on the uncovered Black king to prosecute an attack against the hapless Black monarch, but overlooked a mate in seven on move eighteen, and a much simpler mate in three on the following move. Black made a serious mistake on 21...c6? which drops his queen. Black could have resigned at this stage, but played on until he was mated.

Black was effectively lost in this game by move thirteen; all of Black's moves from 5...Bxb1? to 13...Nbd7?, were mistakes; but what sort of mistakes? They were errors in judgement, and these mistakes demonstrate a basic lack of understanding of the opening principles; essentially flouting basic opening rules was the major factor in Black's loss. After 5...Bxb1?, Black had good chances to develop in a sensible manner, but time after time he failed to play simple moves that could have facilitated sound development.

What lessons can we learn from Black's defeat?

One:Adhere to general opening principles; go back to basics if necessary; put some time into your openings at home, learn a bit of theory, and play through some master games that feature the opening of your choice.

Other comments worth making:

I would entitle this game “The Sunday Roast” because White carved Black apart.

Game three:S.EA. N. OtherInternet2021

Here are my observations:

1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 c6 3.e3 e6 4.Bd3 b6? 5.Nbd2 Be7?! 6.Qe2 Nf6 7.0–0 0–0 8.e4 dxe4 9.Nxe4 Nxe4? 10.Qxe4 f5? 11.Qe2 h6? 12.Bc4 Rf6 13.c3 b5?! 14.Bb3 a5!? 15.a3 a4? 16.Ba2 Nd7? 17.Bxe6+ Kh8 18.Re1 Bd6 19.Bd2 Qc7 20.h3!? Bb7 21.Ba2 Nb6 22.Rad1 c5 23.dxc5 Bxc5 24.Be3 Re8?? 25.Qxb5 Bxe3?? 26.Qxe8+ Kh7 27.Bg8+ Kh8 28.Bf7+ Kh7 29.Qg8# 1–0

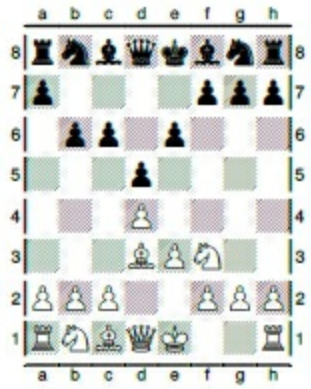
What happened in this game?

1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 c6 3.e3 e6 4.Bd3

Again we see White adopting a Colle, and on this occasion he is able to get his bishop to d3 unopposed.

Black’s first questionable move now arises:

4...b6?



3.1 W

The idea behind this move is that Black wants to exchange off White's good bishop on d3 by playing 5...Ba6.

The drawback to Black's idea is two fold. In the first instance White can easily cut across Black's intentions with 5.Qe2, and after this move White would have three pieces developed to good squares and Black has a pressing need to catch up in development; but even if White allows Black to realise his idea with a move such as 5.Nbd2, then White is still able to cut across Black's idea by advancing his c pawn to c4, so let's say White plays 5.Nbd2, Black plays 5...Ba6, then 6.c4, what has Black gained? Nothing.

White can continue to develop with sensible moves such as 7.Qe2 or 7.0-0, and Black remains behind in development and is hard pressed to justify making four pawn moves on the trot. White could even meet 5...Ba6 with 6.0-0, granting Black his wish of exchanging light-squared bishops on d3, and following the exchange on d3 White can recapture with the c pawn and is well placed to advance in the centre with e3 – e4: 5...Ba6 6.0-0 Bxd3 7.dxc3

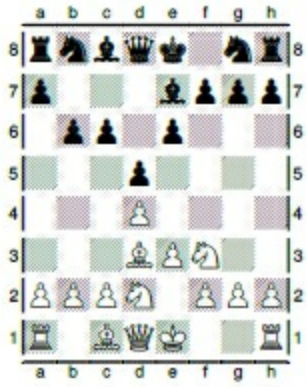
3.2 B

White has a marked lead in development.

Black does better to develop a piece with 4...Nf6. Black's 4...b6, is an over indulgence in pawn moves that leaves Black behind in the race to develop.

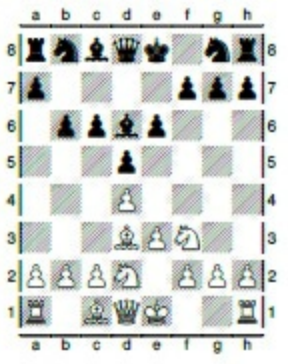
Back to the game:

5.Nbd2 Be7?!



3.3 W

If you close one eye and stand on one leg, you could say that Black has developed his bishop, and you would be correct but how does it benefit Black to place the bishop on e7? What is the bishop doing on this square? What's wrong with sliding it one more square along the diagonal, and putting it on d6? Compare the difference:



3.4 W

On d6 the bishop has a direct influence over the central square e5, it is pointing directly at White's kingside. The bishop is far more active and relevant on d6 than on e7. So why play in such a passive fashion with 5...Be7?

The answer lies in rote playing. It is customary in many Queen's gambit declined openings for White to develop his bishop on g5, pinning the knight that has usually been developed to f6, and Black counters by breaking the pin with ...Be7. Black is guilty of playing the same old dogma without pausing to take in what White has played and how he, Black, can react and deploy his pieces to their best squares.

If you were asked before a game of chess if you are going to play in a negative and passive fashion or an aggressive and relevant manner, what would your answer be?

It's not as if Black is a complete beginner, he is graded 1858, such play is unforgivable.

6.Qe2 Nf6 7.0–0 0–0 8.e4 dxe4 9.Nxe4 Nxe4?

3.5 W

This exchange was totally unnecessary. The knight on f6 is a good piece and does a fine job of defending Black's castled position, why remove this knight from its post, and leave the king less well defended?

There was nothing wrong with 9.Nbd7; this develops a queenside piece, which Black is in need of, and defends the f6 knight, so in the event of White exchanging knights on f6, Black simply replaces it with another knight, but now Black has enabled White to unite his queen and bishop into a battery that threatens checkmate, and in the meantime Black's queenside pieces still remain undeveloped!

10.Qxe4 f5?

3.6 W

This defends against White's threat of mate, but creates a major structural weakness – Black has generated a backward pawn on e6 on a half open file, the e6 pawn is now dependent on a piece (the c8 bishop) for its survival.

11.Qe2 h6?

3.7 W

And what pray tell is the point behind this move? What does it achieve? How does advancing the pawn to h6 benefit Black? The g5 square enjoys the protection of both the queen and bishop; g5 does not need defending against a possible invasion from White's knight. Is 11...h6, played to give the king an out square, to guard against a possible back rank mate? The game is eleven moves old, and still Black has not developed a single queenside piece!

As far as I can tell 11...h6, might have been played with the idea of supporting an advance of the g pawn to g5 at some point in the future with the idea of a kingside assault, but this needs a lot of preparation; as things stand Black's 11...h6, is a waste of time, and serves only to further weaken his position by creating a hole on g6. Black's prime need at this point in time is to develop, he should not be wasting time with meaningless pawn moves.

Black could have ventured the idea of 11...Bf6, which targets White's pawn on d4 and then 12...Re8. He could then continue with ...Bb7, ...Qc7 and ...Nbd7, but all of that is, of course, dependent upon what White does, but at least he has some plan to work towards.

Perhaps also playable instead of 11...h6, was 11...c5, putting some press on White's centre, at least then Black could think about developing his knight to c6.

12.Bc4 Rf6 13.c3 b5?!

This doesn’t achieve anything. White can easily remove his bishop from harms way. Black needs to present a meaningful challenge to White, 13...c5, remains a viable option for Black.

14.Bb3 a5!?

Doing nothing. Black is distracted with the fruitless notion of tracking down the White bishop and somehow trapping it; this just isn’t going to happen. Is Black guilty of repeating the same mistakes as White made in game one of advancing his pawns to target an opponent’s piece? Black is simply wasting time and continues to ignore the development of his queenside pieces, furthermore, Black is failing to present a challenge to the White centre, but he might be thinking of a possible ...Na6, ...Qb6 and ...c5, this might prove worthwhile for Black.

15.a3 a4?

Black must be hoping to push White’s bishop to the b1 – h7 diagonal, but White has no reason to abandon the present diagonal that his light-squared bishop is posted on. Black appears to be fiddling whilst Rome burns. He is making zero progress.

16.Ba2 Nd7?

3.8 W

A major oversight. I can’t believe that Black was intending to sacrifice the e6 pawn, he gains nothing by the loss of this pawn. He still had the plan of ...Na6, ...Qb6 and either ...c5 or ...Bd7. As it is Black has thrown away the

e6 pawn for the sake of developing his knight to d7, this is not compensation, it's just a damaging loss of materiel, and White's bishop gains unrestricted access to the a2 – g8 diagonal, giving a check to Black's king.

17.Bxe6+ Kh8 18.Re1

Threatening to win a piece with 19.Bxd7 and 20.Qxe7.

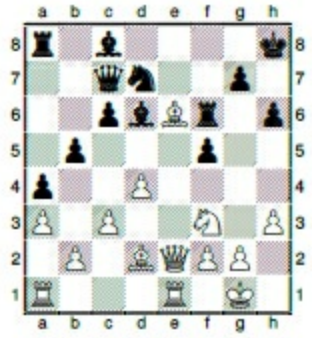
18...Bd6

At least Black spotted the threat.

19.Bd2

White completes development, and can think of bringing the rook on a1 into the game.

19...Qc7 20.h3!?



3.9 B

There is a possibility here that White may be inviting Black to commence a kingside assault based on ...g5, ...g4, but this would need preparing by Black other wise he will be dangerously exposing his king.

20...Bb7

Black completes development.

21.Ba2

White wants to avoid getting the bishop on e6 pinned by Black's rook coming to e8.

21...Nb6

Black's knight has an outpost on d5.

22.Rad1 c5

See diagram 3.10, on the next page.

3.10 W

Black gets a glimmer of counter-play. He puts in a challenge to White's centre (the pawn on d4) and opens a diagonal for his light-squared bishop, and his queen and bishop battery on the h2 – b8 diagonal remain active, this does, however, hang the b5 pawn, but White should not take this pawn, it's poisonous, see the note after 23.dxc5.

The advance of the c pawn does, however, allow White to open the d file for his newly arrived rook on d1.

23.dxc5 Note: 23.Qxb5? is favourable to Black:

23.Qxb5?? Ba6 24.Re8+ Rf8 (24.Qa5 Bd3 and White must give up his queen for the Black rook on a8, advantage Black) 25.Rxf8+ Bxf8 26.Bf4 (26.Qa5 Be2) Qb7, and Black stands better. Back to the game:

23...Bxc5 24.Be3

White is a pawn up so it makes sense to exchange off pieces, especially as Black is generating some piece activity.

24...Re8??

This is a critical mistake, and entirely avoidable, instead of 24...Re8?? Black has playable options that still leave him in the game, such as 24...Bxe3 or 24...Bxf3, but Black now falls quickly.

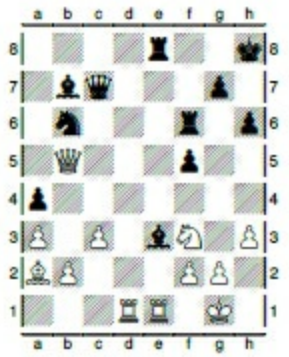
25.Qxb5

This drops a second pawn, but that is the very least of Black's problems, as he now faces a sever dilemma.

3.11 B

Black's bishop on c5 is attacked twice and only defended once, whilst White's queen also threatens Black's rook on e8, which is totally devoid of any defence. What is Black to do?

25...Bxe3??



3.12 W

A massive slip in concentration. Black may have been rattled by the loss of his pawn on b5, and this might have caused a further breakdown in attention, but this is a fatal oversight, it costs Black a rook and the whole game as White has a forced mate.

However, the situation after 25.Qxb5 was far from easy for Black to react to; probably best is 25...Rxe3, when Black has one remaining hope that White will go wrong with 26.fxe3? Bxf3 27.gxf3? and Black has a forced mate: 27...Qg3+ 28.Kh1 (28.Kf1 Qxf3+ 29.Kg1 Rg6+ 30.Kh2 Qg2#) 28...Qxh3+ 29.Kg1 Rg6+ 30.Kf2 Qg2#.

So of course White would meet 25...Rxe3 with 26.Rxe3 after which White is still much better:

How is Black to continue?

Black has 26...Be4 or 26...Bxf3 neither of which hold any real promise

for him. 26...Rg6? or 26...Bxe3? Leaves White a forced mate:

26...Rg6? 27.Qe8+ Kh7 (27...Bf8 28.Qxf8+ Kh7 29.Qg8+) 28.Qg8#

26...Bxe3? 27.Qe8+ with the same mate/s coming up.

Back to the game:

26.Qxe8+ Kh7 27.Bg8+ Kh8 28.Bf7+ Kh7 29.Qg8# 1–0

Why did Black lose this game?

Black was guilty of a number of inaccuracies and time wasting in the opening with 4...b6?, which does nothing for his development, and allows White's lead to increase. Black quickly followed with the wasteful 5...Be7? Failing to bring the bishop to its most effective square – d6. Black followed these mistakes with needlessly exchanging his f6 knight for White's knight on e4 with 9...Nxe4?, again Black could have developed here with 9...Nbd7.

Black's reaction to White's threat of mate with 10.Qxe4, saw a more serious error with 10...f5? this creates a backward pawn on e6, this pawn now needs constant support from a piece. Black could have done a lot better with 10...g6, which guards against mate on h7 and avoids creating a structural weakness.

Again we see Black rapidly following one mistake with another as he follows 10...f5? with 11...h6? This is yet another example of time wasting which ignores development and only succeeds in punching another hole into his own position on g6.

Black then embarks on a futile crusade on the queenside with 13...b5?!, 14...a5!? and 15...a4? This appears to be an attempt to trap White's bishop that can't be trapped, or to knock the White bishop off its promising diagonal to a less effective diagonal, which to say the best is optimistic, but in no way constructive or beneficial to Black's cause, it's time wasting and again Black ignores development, as after 14...a5 he could have developed with ...Na6, ...Qb6 and ...Bd7.

Black makes another mistake with 16...Nd7? Unlike his previous mistakes this one loses materiel as he interrupts the line of communication between his bishop on c8 and the pawn on e6, and Black is further punished by facing a check from White's bishop and concedes the a2 – g8 diagonal to the White bishop.

After this series of mistakes Black manages to complete his development; more by accident than design. Black could even argue that dropping the pawn on e6 was a deliberate sacrifice to speed up his development. I am still of the opinion that it was an oversight on Black's part.

Black went error free then for several moves, until he played the game losing 24...Re8??

To an extent Black's mistake was understandable. He dropped his guard for a split second; he became distracted by the possible tactical shot of winning White's bishop on e3. Black's rook on e8 pins the e3 bishop against White's queen, and Black hopes to play ...f4 on his next move, winning White's bishop, but Black paid the ultimate price for his carelessness.

By exchanging on e3, with 25...Bxe3?? Black saves his bishop, but loses the game. I think Black just overlooked that his rook on e8 was hanging, but at least he stayed true to form and kept to his characteristic style of following one mistake immediately with another.

What lessons can we learn from this game?

One: Don't waste time in the opening, or at any other stage of the game. The opening is for bringing pieces onto effective squares, and not for meaningless pawn moves.

Two: Don't play by rote. Take notice of the position, and deploy your pieces on their best squares.

Three: Don't waste time pursuing an idea that has no substance.

Four: Play meaningfully with a clear plan of action.

Five: Test your ideas. Is your plan relevant? Try to make sure that it is.

Six:I saved the most important one till last: PAY ATTENTION!

Black needlessly dropped a pawn with 16...Nd7?, and then abandoned the b5 pawn with ruinous consequences with 24...Re8??

Both of these mistakes could have been avoided with more care and attention.

Other comments worth making:

In Britain there is a motoring offence of driving with undue care and attention. The same can happen in chess, and Black was certainly guilty of playing chess with undue care and attention.

This is something we must avoid in our own games.

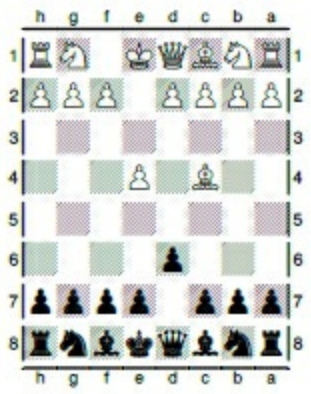
Game four:A. N. OtherS.EInternet2021

Here are my observations:

1.e4 d6 2.Bc4?! Nf6 3.d3?! c6 4.a3?! d5 5.exd5 cxd5 6.Ba2 Nc6?! 7.Ne2?! Bf5 8.0–0 e6 9.Ng3?! Bg6 10.f4?! h5?! 11.f5 Qb6+?! 12.Kh1 h4 13.fxg6 hxg3 14.gxf7+ Kxf7 15.h3 Kg8 16.Qf3?! Bd6 17.b4 Rf8 18.Be3 Qc7 19.Qe2 Ne5 20.Nd2?! Nfg4? 21.Rxf8+ Kxf8? 22.Qf1+? Kg8 23.Bf4? Nf2+ 24.Kg1 Qb6 25.Bxg3 Nxh3+ 26.Kh2 Nf4+ 27.Bh4 Rxh4+ 28.Kg3 g5 29.Nf3 Rg4+ 30.Kh2 Rxg2+ 31.Kh1 Ng4 32.Re1 Nf2+ 33.Qxf2 Qxf2 0–1

What happened in this game?

1.e4 d6 2.Bc4?! See diagram 4.1.



4.1 B

Why mark this move down? The bishop is developed to an optimum square, so what's the problem?

The issue here is that it's easy for Black to shut White's c4 bishop out of the game. Furthermore, it is inappropriate for White to develop the bishop on c4 unless Black has answered 1.e4 with 1...e5. White's 2.Bc4 is called the Bishop's Opening, and can be a very effective way of meeting 1.e4 e5, indeed both John Emms, "attacking with 1.e4," and Andrew Soltis, "Winning with 1.e4," recommend this line.

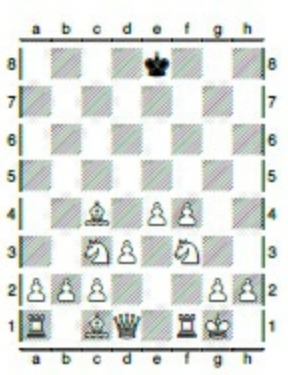
Emms says "The Bishop's Opening is probably the most straightforward line to play against [1.e4] e5. Larsen used it to beat many grandmasters in the 70s and 80s and showed it could be used as a good weapon."

Whilst Soltis states "Against [1.e4] e5 we recommend a neglected and much underrated weapon called the King's Gambit Declined."

Although Soltis refers to this as the King's Gambit Declined, he accepts that 1.e4 e5 2.Bc4 is technically the Bishop's Opening.

Both authors, however, point to White achieving a set-up that is akin to the King's Gambit Declined:

See diagram 4.2, on the next page.

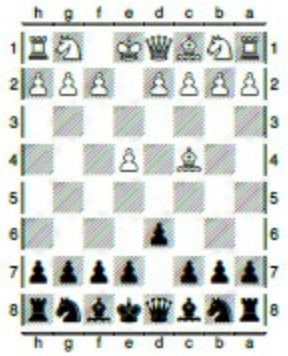


4.2

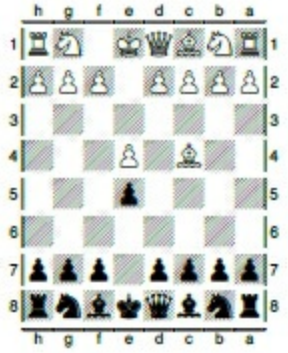
This is the position that White should be aiming for.

The big BUT for White in Game four, however, is that Black has not met 1.e4 with 1...e5.

Compare the two positions:



4.3 B



4.4 B

Diagram 4.4, is a true Bishop’s Opening.

The prime difference is that in the Bishop’s Opening proper, Black has no means of closing-down White’s bishop on c4, but in Game four, Black has not committed his e pawn, therefore, Black can play 2...e6, and White’s bishop is already biting on granite and looks misplaced:

4.5 W

However, since 2...e6 closes in Black’s c8 bishop, Black can also opt for 2...c6, and close the door on White’s bishop with a timely ...d5. Emms says of this plan for Black that “This line.... is perhaps the critical test of the Bishop’s Opening.”

I feel that if White plays this line against anything other than 1...e5, that he doesn’t understand the opening of his choice. Over the last five months, in rapid play games, I have encountered this line: 1.e4 d6 2.Bc4, twenty four times, and White scores a miserable 37.5%, which gives Black a whopping 62.5%, score against this line.

Anyway, time will tell if White’s choice is appropriate or not, but bear in mind that the bishop on c4 is the star of White’s show, and lots is expected from it, back to the game:

2...Nf6 3.d3?!

This is recommended in the Bishop’s Opening, as 3.Nc3 runs into the fork trick variation with 3...Nxe4 4.Nxe4 d5, but I see nothing wrong with 3.Nc3 as White can meet 3...Nxe4 with 4.Bxf7+, and Black’s loss of castling

rights and the somewhat exposed nature of his king is very inconvenient. Black has to spend time getting his rook to f8 and his king to g8. I would say that this is better for White.

The text move – 3.d3 prevents White's bishop coming back to the centre, and the bishop is now committed to its present diagonal.

3...c6 4.a3?!

Understandably White wants to preserve his bishop, it is after all the star of his show, and it looks to be inevitable that the bishop will be chased off its current post by either ...b5 or ...d5, in the near future, so White creates a bolt hole thus furnishing a line of retreat for the bishop along the a2 – g8 diagonal, but this is rigid.

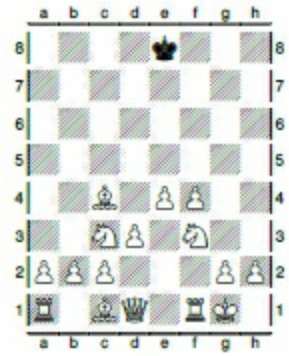
White could have played the far more flexible 4.c3, this gives the bishop more than just the one option; given this new degree of suppleness the bishop has the choice of redeploying on a new diagonal, as it now has a possible new home on c2, taking up residence on the b1 – h7 line. How many times does the bishop find itself placed here in the closed Ruy Lopez? Hundreds of thousands of times I would guess. White had another means of keeping the bishop on its present diagonal with 4.a4, this gains influence over the b5 square and limits Black's immediate 4...b5; but better than either 4.c3 or 4.a4 was 4.Bb3, this is far superior, and ultimately it allows White to retain his central pawn on e4, after 4.a3, White has little option but to surrender the centre after Black's 4...d5, which is disadvantageous for White. Be flexible and open in your thinking, consider more than just the obvious. Anyway, keep an eye on White's light-squared bishop, let's see if it lives up to star billing.

4...d5 5.exd5 cxd5 6.Ba2.

4.6 B

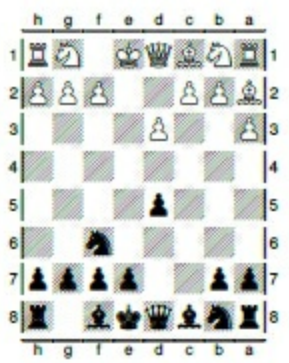
Do you remember what White's ideal set-up was for the Bishop's Opening?

Let's remind ourselves:



4.2

This is White's ideal position, as previously stated in diagram 4.2. How does it compare to White's position in diagram in 4.6?



4.6 B

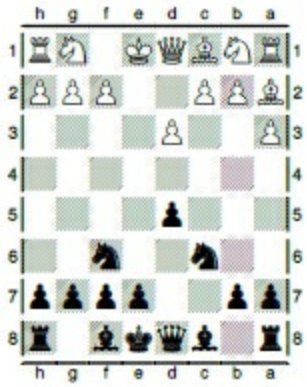
White has already lost his way. His e4 pawn is gone. He lacks influence and space in the centre, and how can he make sense of the bishop tucked away on a2? White can only justify the placement of his bishop on the a2 – g8 diagonal if this line is open for the bishop; if this line remains closed then the bishop is no more than a spectator, instead of being the star of the show it doesn't even get one line. Can you imagine a film starring Tom Curise, when you see him in the opening shot, and after that you never see him again throughout the whole film? Well, don't go away, we might see Tom Bishop getting a line or two in.

Although the position is roughly equal, let's have a take on White's current position and view the positives:

White has the half open e file. He needs to develop the g1 knight, which may be prefaced with 7.h3 first to prevent the ...Bg4 pin, after which he can castle, completing his kingside development. White may then occupy the e file with a rook, and find a means of advancing his c pawn to challenge Black's centre and open a line for Tom Bishop, but this has to be prepared with say Nbd2 and Qe2; providing that White can sensibly develop and push the c pawn he may still claim to have some sort of advantage.

Black meanwhile has the lion's share of the centre and the half open c file, but he still needs to develop in a sensible fashion.

6...Nc6?!



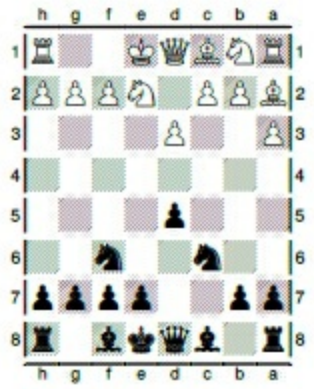
4.7 W

Black needs to get his bishop on c8 outside of the pawn chain. The text move allows White the annoying 7.Bg5, which obliges Black to play 7...e6, and his bishop on c8 is trapped in behind its own pawns, not good.

In the event of 7.Bg5, Black could play 7...e5, but this allows White to double Black's pawns in the f file with 8.Bxf6, and Black is obliged to accept the doubled f pawns or drop the d5 pawn after 8...Qxf6 and 9.Bxd5, in which case we see Tom Bishop starring in his own show; it is much better for Black to have a compact cohesive pawn chain on e6 and d5.

7.Ne2?!

See diagram 4.8.



4.8 B

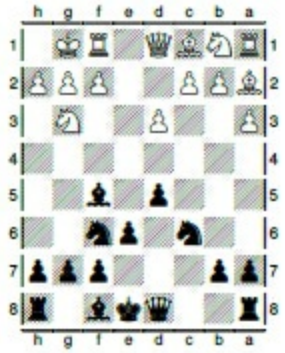
White misses 7.Bg5 and his opportunity to lock Black's light-squared bishop in; but what is the point behind 7.Ne2? Why develop the knight here

instead of the optimum f3 square?

White doesn't want to invest a tempo with 7.h3 to avoid the bishop pin of 7...Bg4, so he saves time by bringing the knight to an inferior square, does that make sense? The knight has little scope or promise on e2, and blocks the e file for his rook.

7...Bf5 8.0–0 e6

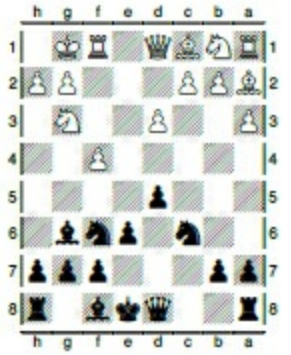
Black could have invested a tempo in 8...b5, at this point to hold back a possible c4 break by White, but it's an expensive move to make and he may fall behind in development. 9.Ng3?!



4.9 B

The good point about this move is that it frees up the e file for White's rook and it gets a hit on Black's bishop on f5, but the knight looks offside here, and is lacking in scope. White had the opportunity to play 9.c4 - putting pressure on Black's centre and trying to get Tom back into the game, but White has a deeper plan.

9...Bg6 10.f4?!



4.10 B

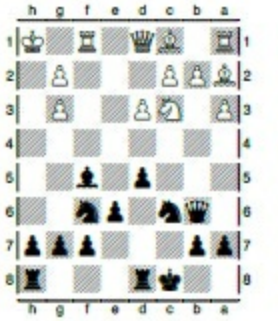
This is premature. White makes sense of his knight on g3 and reveals his big idea – he's going to smash Black off the board by advancing in the f file and forcing open this file, then he will mass his major pieces in the f file and obliterate Black. I don't think so.

What other moves might White have considered other than 10.f4?! Well he's still in the opening phase of the game so why not a developing move such as 10.Nd2, this helps the c pawn to advance; he may have played 10.Re1, placing the rook on a half open file, he could have played 10.Qe2, placing the queen on a half open file and supporting the advance of the c pawn, he might have played 10.Bg5, pinning Black's knight on f6 and developing a queenside piece, or he still has 10.c4, but no! White rejects sensible and patient development in favour of a reckless Neanderthal approach, and incidentally you may have noticed that White has opened a diagonal to his king, inviting Black to gain tempo with speedy development of his bishop to c5 with check, or ...Qb6+.

10...h5?!

Black missed an excellent chance to stomp all over White's caveman 'plan' with 10...Bd6; if White tries to push his f pawn down the board with 11.f5? Black plays either 11...Bxg3, or 11...Qb6+, with a clear advantage:

11.f5 Bxg3 12.hxg3 (12.fxg6 Qb6+13.Kh1 hxg6 14.h3 0-0-0 Black is better) 12...Bxf5 13.Nc3 Qb6+ 14.Kh1 0-0-0, Black stands better.



11.f5 Qb6+, this transposes to the previous line, 12.Kh1 (12.d4 Qxd4+ 13.Qxd4 Nxd4 14.fxg6 Nxc2 Black is better.) 12...Bxg3 13.hxg3 (13.fxg6 hxg6 14.h3 Ne5 intending 15...Neg4 and 16...Nf2+) 13...Bxf5 14.Nc3 0-0-0, Black is better. See the next diagram.

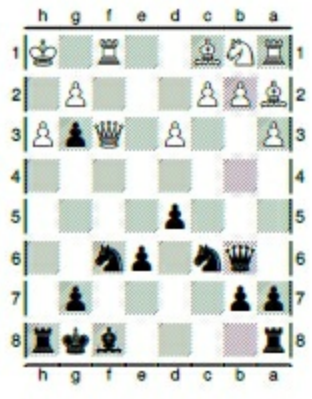
Back to the game:

11.f5 Qb6+?!

11...Bc5+, is better as Black can still opt for ...b5, holding back the advance of White's c pawn.

12.Kh1 h4 13.fxg6 hxg3 14.gxf7+ Kxf7 15.h3 Kg8 16.Qf3?!

See diagram 4.11, on the next page.



4.11 B

White still has his caveman head on. The sad thing is that I'm convinced White believes he is winning. He has doubled major pieces in the f file, all according to Neanderthal plan A, and somehow he is sure that this is going to enable him to blast through to Black's king and win; but he still had the c4 option trying to bring Tom Bishop into the game and justify the posting of this bishop on the a2 – g8 diagonal.

If we freeze-frame and view the position at this point what advantages can we say that White has? He has occupation of the open f file, but this is an open file and Black is not far away from contesting ownership of this line with his a8 rook. Black has a backward pawn on the half open e file, perhaps White can target this pawn. White's play has forced Black to concede castling rights, meaning that his rooks cannot be united on the first rank, meanwhile White's disadvantages are more numerous: his entire queenside is undeveloped, his bishop on a2, the star of his show, is looking at a brick wall in the shape of the d5 pawn; and Black is only millimeters away from completing development with ...Bd6 and ...Raf8; and Black's rook on h8 is on an open line staring directly at White's king, and open lines, as we know, are the avenues of attack. White's pawn on h3, is pinned against the king, and it's not as if Black had to fight tooth and nail to obtain this open line for his rook – White gifted it to him. White still has a good deal of catching up to do in development and there is no way in which he can claim to be better, he is barely in the game at all, it is Black that stands better.

16...Bd6 17.b4

And what great idea has propelled this pawn forward? White wants to develop his dark-squared bishop, but he needs to move the b pawn first other wise the b pawn can be taken by Black's queen, actually if White deploys the bishop on b2 it is well posted, and he *still* has the c pawn to advance which might free his imprisoned bishop on a2.

17...Rf8

Black is set to challenge White in the f file.

18.Be3

I thought bringing the bishop to b2 was a better use of this bishop, but White at least has a measure of control over the g1 – a7 diagonal, knocking Black's queen of its perch, and he finally gets round to developing one of his queenside pieces.

18...Qc7 19.Qe2

White is wise to move his queen away from the same file as Black's newly arrived rook in the f file. White has progressed up the evolutionary scale to a homo heidelbergensis.

19...Ne5

Black is getting ready to plant a knight on g4, White needs to be on his guard, leaving the a7 pawn up for White's bishop is neither here or there.

20.Nd2?!

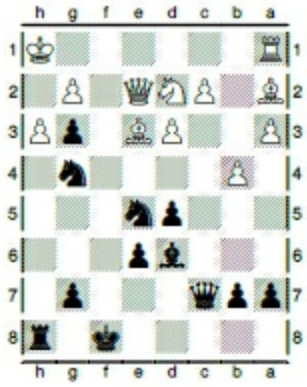
White wants to complete his development, but this hangs his pawn on c2, not that it's really worth Black's time to take this pawn, incidentally White could still push his c pawn.

20...Nfg4?

This opens the f file, which falls in with White's plan, giving White a clear advantage. Black would have done better with 20...Qxc2.

21.Rxf8+ (21.d4 also causes Black problems) 21...Kxf8?

See diagram 4.12, on the next page.



4.12 W

Black should have taken back with his bishop; recapturing on f8 leaves the Black king with its head above the parapet, it can be shot at.

22.Qf1+?

Why didn't White bring the a1 rook into play? His queen is already in the game, but the poor old rook on a1 is doing nothing and White has this great opportunity to make a really telling contribution.

22...Kg8

Black's king is safe and White missed his chance to turn things around.

Here's what could have happened if White had played the far superior 20.Rf1+:

22.Rf1+ Nf6*

Black has to bring his knight back to cover the king.

Black has three other lines, but he runs into trouble in each of them:

A, 22...Kg8

B, 22...Ke7

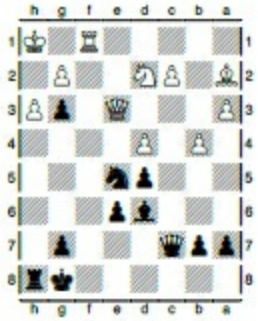
C, 22...Ke8

A, 22...Kg8 This proves catastrophic for Black:

23.d4

This is the move that unglues Black's defences.

23...Nxe3 24.Qxe3



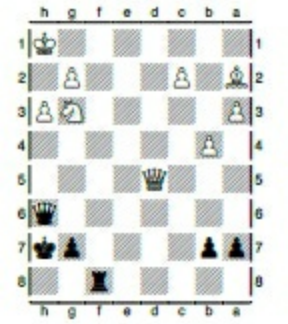
What is Black to do with his e5 knight? If Black moves the knight out of harm's way then the e6 pawn falls with check; without going into reams of analysis it is safe to say that from this point that all roads lead to ruin for Black.

Black had one major alternative to 23...Nxe3:

A1, 23...Qc3 (A2, 23...Qxc2? 24.Bb1, or 24.dxe5)

This doesn't save Black as White simply picks up two minor pieces for the rook: 24.dxe5 Nxe3 25.exd6 Nxf1 26.Qxe6+ Kh7 27.Nxf1 Rf8 (27...Qa1 probably Black's best try, but it still falls short thanks to White's passed pawn on d6: 28.Qf7 Qxa2 29.Qh5+ Kg8 30.Qe8+ Kh7 31.d7 Black can't prevent White from queening: 31...Qb1 32.Qh5+ Kg8 d8=Q#; or 31...Rxe8? dxe8=Q; one more futile try on Black's part is 31...g6 32.Qxh8+ Kxh8 d8=Q.) 28.Qe2 Qe5, looks good but doesn't work, 29.Nxg3 Qxd6 30.Qh5+

Qh6 (30...Kg8? 31.Bxd5+) 31.Qxd5.



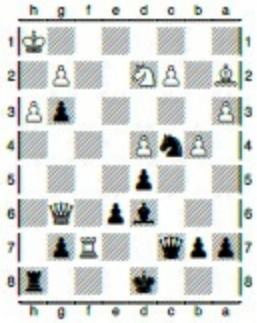
White is winning; Neanderthal becomes homosapien.

B, 22...Ke7

At least on e7 the king offers protection to the e6 pawn, but the Black king is exposed.

23.d4 again this move unglues Black.

23...Nxe3 24.Qxe3 Nc4 25.Qg5+ Ke8 26.Qg6+ Kd8 27.Rf7



And White is breaking through.

C, 22...Ke8

This fails to save the pawn on e6:

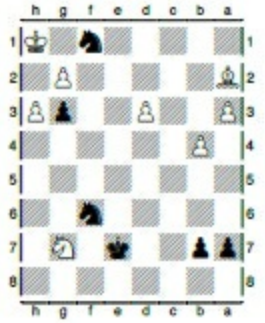
23.d4 Nxe3 24.Qxe3

Black cannot escape his dilemma.

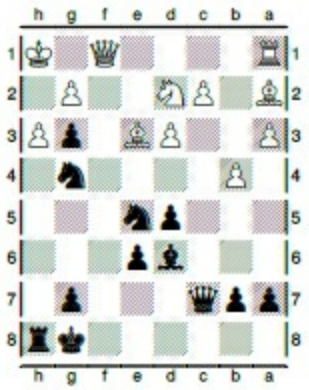
*Continuing from the original choice for Black after 22.Rf1+: 22...Nf6 23.c4

Finally an attempted prison break for the a2 bishop.

23...Ng6 24.Qg4 Qf7 25.Qg5 Ne7 26.cxd5 Nexd5 27.Ne4 Rh5 28.Nxd6 Rxg5 29.Nxf7 Nxe3 30.Nxg5 Nxf1 31.Nxe6+ Ke7 32.Nxg7



White is two pawns up and should convert, but he played the lackluster 22...Qf1+? which allowed 22...Kg8:



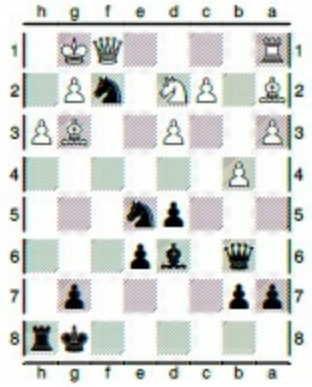
4.13 W

Now White's bishop on e3 is hanging, this is another consequence of 22.Qf1+?, his c pawn is also dangling in thin air.

23.Bf4?

Tempted by the possible win of the g3 pawn White critically abandons the crucial g1 – a7 diagonal, 23.Bd4 was far better for White, now he is lost.

23...Nf2+ 24.Kg1 Qb6 25.Bxg3?



4.14 B

White takes a deep gulp from the bottle of optimism, hoping to pick up the knight on f2, but White's king is fatally exposed, and an exposed king is a half dead king.

25...Nxh3++

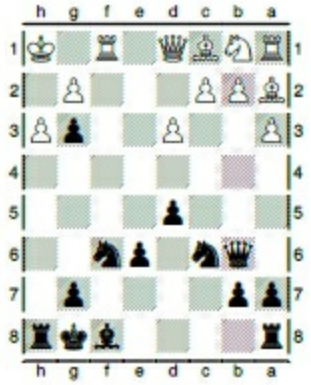
A double check *and* a discovered check. The White king is in a deadly cross fire, drawing shot and shell from Black's queen, knights, rook and bishop. Black has mate in two.

26.Kh2 (26.Kg1 Rh1#) 26...Nf2+ 27.Bh4 (27.Kg1 Rh1#) 27...Nf3++#.

Why did White lose this game?

White opened with an early deployment of his bishop to c4, but very soon he found this bishop sidelined, and out of play, and he also conceded ground in the centre. He seems to abandon any idea of using the bishop on c4, and flicks an unrelated plan B into action which is based on opening the f file and attacking on the kingside, but this is an ill conceived plan which is lacking in resources, and doesn't gel with the idea of bringing his bishop out to c4.

If we fast-forward to move fifteen, we can see that White's campaign does succeed in compromising Black to a degree.

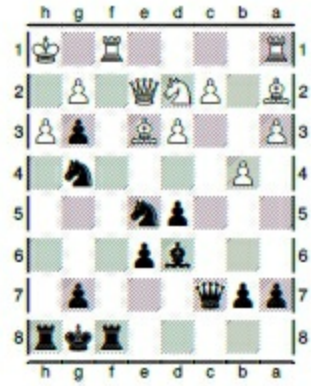


4.15 W

Black has lost castling rights, and has a backward pawn on e6. Black, however, has compensation in the shape of his rook in the h file which is well placed on a half open file pointing directly at White's king. White can still regroup at this point and draw up new plans, he still has a desperate need to develop his queenside pieces, but with 16.Qf3?! he cleves to his caveman assault.

Play proceeds to the next critical point which arrives on move twenty, and at this point Black goes wrong with 20...Nfg4?

See diagram 4.16.



4.16 W

White's development has progressed, and critically he can now take control of the open f file, however, White failed to capitalise on Black's mistake and made mistakes of his own, which proved to be fatal.

Exchanging rooks, 21.Rxf8+, is fine for White, but he then goes terrible wrong by failing to active the rook on a1, which is left out in the cold as a passive bystander, and instead gives a harmless check on f1 with his queen- 22.Qf1+, what was going on in White's mind is beyond me, had he brought his a1 rook into the game with 22.Rf1+, it's virtually game over for Black, and somehow White's caveman attack wins the day.

White's opportunity to set a fire in Black's heart disappears in an instant and he then makes the game-losing mistake of removing his bishop from the vital g1 – a7 diagonal with 23.Bf4? This was the tipping point, there is no return for White after this move.

What lessons can we learn from this game?

There are a number of lessons to be learned from this game, but many of the mistakes we saw from the last game also make a repeat performance in this game.

Here are a few points I picked from the previous game which apply in this game as well:

One:Don't waste time pursuing an idea that has no substance.

Two:Test your ideas. Is your plan relevant? Try to make sure that it is. In this game we see the same type of thing when White sacrificed the development of his queenside pieces and run roughshod over several worthy ideas for the sake of launching an early kingside attack that held little promise.

Three:Take time out to really look at the position. There are occasions when it is necessary to sit back in a detached manner, and assess the situation. White should have done this before his tenth move, but instead he ran with a rash and poorly thought out plan.

Four:And again - PAY ATTENTION!

With just a little bit of thought White had a won game with 22.Rf1+. This sort of move should be abundantly obvious; it should be

a move that plays itself, and we should be able to identify these moves blindfolded and with both legs tied behind our back. White's rook on a1 never moved in the entire game! This leads to another point:

Five:Bring your pieces into the game. Don't leave pieces fallow; *use* your resources, don't abuse them. Failing to play this obvious check (22.Rf1+) was a major down fall in White's game, and should this type of mistake continue to occur in your games, then go right back to basics and start again. A recurring error of this nature will cost game after game.

Other comments worth mentioning:

I titled this game "The Stranded Whale", because it reminded me of what Churchill said about Anzio:

"I had hoped that we were hurling a wildcat onto the shore, but all we got was a stranded whale."

White's rook on a1 had the potential to unleash a wildcat into Black's position, but instead this wonderful resource remained untouched, and stranded like a huge fish out of water; failing to utilise this piece at a vital stage of the game was a crime against chess, and White deserved to lose.

Game five: S.E Hunt L. W Rhyl2004

Here are my observations:

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nd4?! 4.Nxd4 cxd4 5.0–0 a6 6.Ba4 b5 7.Bb3 e6 8.d3 g6 9.f4 Bg7 10.Nd2 Ne7 11.Nf3 0–0 12.Qe2 Bb7 13.Qf2 Nc6? 14.a3?! Rc8 15.Bd2 d6?! 16.Rac1?! Kh8?! 17.Kh1 a5? 18.f5! exf5? 19.exf5 Ne7? 20.Ng5 Nxf5 21.Nxf7+ Rxf7 22.Bxf7 Nh4 23.Rg1?! Rc5 24.Bxa5 Qa8? 25.Qxh4 Rc8 26.Bxg6 h6 27.Bd2 1–0

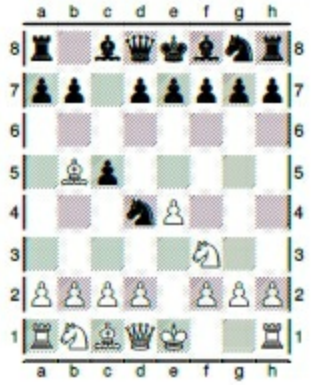
What happened in this game?

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5

On move three White opts for 3.Bb5, The Rossolimo Variation of the Sicilian Defence.

3...Nd4?!

Black's response - 3...Nd4?!, is somewhat less than good.

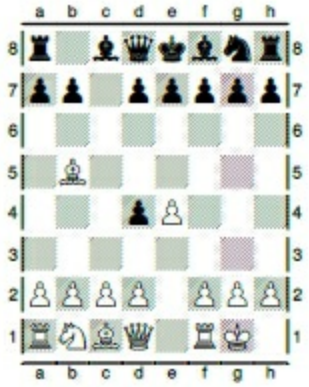


5.1 W

This opening is rich in theory, and 3...g6, 3...e6 and 3...d6 are recognised as being superior to the text move, but why should that be the case?

In playing 3...Nd4?!, Black has moved a developed piece for a second time without sufficient justification. In terms of quantity White already has two pieces deployed to Black's one; this gives White double the number of pieces in the field, which in pure quantity terms makes White twice as good as Black. However, Black could argue that his knight on d4 attacks the White bishop on b5, and after the text moves of 4.Nxd4 cxd4, White's bishop on b5 is totally misplaced and he will have to invest tempo redeploying the b5 bishop, hence Black justifies his 3...Nd4; but if we play just two more moves into the game Black's choice of 3...Nd4, is exposed as a waste of time:

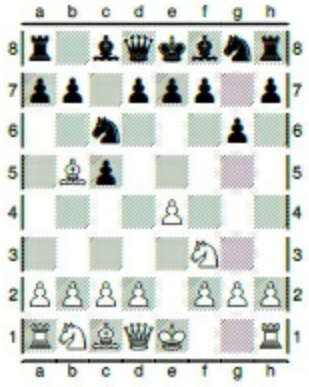
4.Nxd4 cxd4 5.0–0



5.2 B

White has a lead in development; he has completed his kingside development, and his bishop on b5 can quickly be redeployed to the active a2 – g8 diagonal, via either Ba4, b3, or Bc4. Meanwhile, how many pieces does Black have developed? None! And Black's pawn on d4 presents a target for White's pieces.

If we go back to move three and play the more widely employed and theory endorsed move of 3...g6 we can view a subtle difference:



5.3

Black hasn't wasted any time in moving the c6 knight for a second time and is ready to bring his bishop into play on g7. White can still castle, and obtain a lead in development, or he can exchange on c6, inflicting structural damage on Black's position.

The theoretically approved 3...g6 is a nuanced shade of gray, but consider the statistics: 3...g6 scores 41%, for Black in the Chess.com database, and

42.5%, in my Chess Base database, whilst 3...Nd4, gives Black a miserable 24.5%, Chess.com, and only a slightly better score in Chess Base of 33.4%.

Theoretically recommend moves find their way into play for good reason.

I think that Black may have played this inferior line in the hope of White going wrong with 5.d3? instead of 5.0-0, in which case Black wins the b5 bishop with 5...Qa5+; it is possible that Black could have played this pet line a dozen times and White falls for the cheapo in fifty percent of cases, but it's cheap, horrible, nasty and transparent.

5...a6 6.Ba4 b5 7.Bb3 e6

Black puts a barrier in the way of White's light-squared bishop.

8.d3 g6 9.f4 Bg7

5.4 W

We are nine moves deep into the game, and only now does Black have a piece off his first rank. Black is slightly behind in development, and White has the lion's share of the centre, White has a small plus.

10.Nd2 Ne7 11.Nf3 0–0 12.Qe2

See diagram 5.5, on the next page.

5.5 B

White now has a position akin to the ideal set-up for White in the previous game: The Bishop's Opening; it will be interesting to see if White can make more of his light-squared bishop in this game than was managed in the preceding outing.

12...Bb7.

5.6 W

Let's freeze frame at this juncture and carry out an assessment and evaluation exercise.

So far both players have set-up in a sensible fashion. White can complete his development with 13.Bd2, or he can target Black's pawn on d4 with 13.Qf2, but at some point he will need to find a role for the c1 bishop and unite his rooks on the first rank. White's king is looking just a little exposed on the g1 – a7 diagonal, so it would be a wise precaution to tuck the king

away on h1, out of harm's way. One other point of concern for White is the pawn on c2. White doesn't have any open or half open files, but Black has the half open c file, and it seems natural to bring his rook or queen to the half open file and try to make something happen in the c file, currently the c2 pawn is anchored by both the bishop on b3 and the queen on e2, but if White brings his c1 bishop off the first rank to d2 then the c2 pawn may need reinforcing, otherwise the bishop on b3 could become tied down to the defence of the c pawn, and this is to be avoided, so White could think about deploying his a1 rook to c1, leaving his light-squared bishop free to cause trouble. Ideally White needs to break open the diagonal for his light-squared bishop, and the possible f5 pawn advance may be a means of achieving this aim in the future.

At present Black is policing his position well. The knight on e7 is well placed, but a tad defensive, in that it is needed to place an extra guard on f5 to deter a possible pawn break by White in the f file, furthermore, the knight stands well placed to support a possible d5 pawn advance for Black in the centre. It is unlikely that White would meet a possible ...d5, with e4xd5, but he might, in which case Black can force the exchange of light-squared bishops by recapturing on d5 with his bishop. Black can complete his development with ...Qc7, or ...Qb6. Black has a structural defect in the shape on the doubled pawns in the d file, and it's not entirely clear if the pawn on d4 is a strength or weakness. Black's king is safe, and he has a natural home for his a8 rook on c8, and full development is close to hand.

Neither side has any serious weaknesses. The game is more or less even.

13.Qf2 Nc6?

5.7 W

Black succeeds in defending the d4 pawn, but critically he withdraws the knight's enhanced protection from the f5 square, this makes the f5 pawn break possible for White.

Better for Black would have been 13...Qb6, this also defends the d4 pawn and has the bonus of completing Black's development, whilst leaving the knight on e7 in place to shore up the f5 square, furthermore, keeping the knight on e7 maintains a possible ...d5 pawn break for Black; another interesting rejoinder for Black was 13...f5.

14.a3?!

This might be nitpicking, but Stockfish and other metal minds recommend an immediate 14.f5, but how then does White react to 14...Na5?

I feel that its better to retain the light-squared bishop, and thus creating this bolt hole is fully justifiable.

14...Rc8?

More prudent would be 14...Qb6, and returning the knight to e7. Black needs to guard against White's coming f5 pawn break.

15.Bd2 d6?!

15...Qb6 and Ne7 still need to be played. Black plays with only one eye open.

15...d6, is kind of playing by route, as the d pawn is frequently played to this square in many examples of the Sicilian, and Black is mindful of a possible e5 pawn advance by White, so he guards against this possibility when the real danger to him lies in White advancing with the f pawn. However, there is a point to White advancing with e5 as it makes the e4 square available to his knight, and the f3 knight has a possible inroad to Black's position via Ng5 and Ne4, after which the knight is well sited and has invasion squares on c5, d6 and f6; but the resulting pawn structure is rigid and White has little opportunity to open a line for his light-squared bishop; and in any case, Black can cut across this idea with 15...h6, denying the White knight access to g5. White has to prioritise, and his heart is set on creating an open line for his light-squared bishop, but in playing 15...d6, Black was at least aware of this potential threat, but remains guilty of overlooking the bigger threat of White breaking with the f pawn to f5.

15...Na5 was another possibility, obliging White to exchange his dark-squared bishop for the knight, or suffer the exchange of his light-squared bishop.

16.Rac1?!

White wants to reinforce his c pawn, but is he being over cautious?

Engines demand that f5 is played now.

Crafty 23.01 gives the following line:

16.f5 exf5 17.exf5 d5 18.Rae1 Qd6 19.Ng5 h6 20.f6 Bh8 21.Nh3 g5 22.Qf5 Na7 23.Nxg5 hxg5 24.Qxg5+ Kh7 25.Rf3 Qd7 26.Rf4 Qh3 27.gxh3 Rc6 28.Rh4#

Easy stuff for an engine, but White is human and can't calculate twelve moves ahead that contain many twists and turns, so White continues to tie off loose ends prior to the advance of his f pawn.

16...Kh8?!

It would seem that Black has some awareness of White's desire to open the line for his light-squared bishop, and takes the precaution of removing his king from the same diagonal as White's bishop, however, the drawback to this is that the f7 pawn is robbed of vital support that *was* provided by the king.

17.Kh1

This seems an easier move to understand than 16...Kh8?! White takes time out to tuck his king away out of harm's way. Nevertheless, engines continue to scream out that *now* is the time to advance with the f5 pawn break.

17...a5?

A strange move to play, it's far from clear what Black hopes for from this move.

18.f5!

After completing his preparations White is happy to make this pawn advance, and Black, to his shame, has allowed it to take place.

18...exf5?

See diagram 5.8, on the next page.

5.8 W

This is capitulation!

White wants to open the a2 – g8 diagonal for his light-squared bishop, and Black helps him to achieve this aim, 18...gxf5, would have offered more resistance, but it’s still difficult for Black.

19.exf5 Ne7?

More capitulation.

Black could have tried 19...d5, closing the diagonal to White’s light-squared bishop, or 19...Ne5, which muddies the waters a bit, but 19...Ne7, affords White the ability to attack on two fronts and expose a serious tactical weakness in Black’s position.

20.Ng5

5.9 B

White has the threat of 21.Nxf7+, forking Black’s king and queen, forcing Black to surrender the exchange, or he can play 21.f6, forking Black’s knight on e7 and his bishop on g7. Engines give 20.f6, as an alternative, but 20.Ng5, is much simpler and winning.

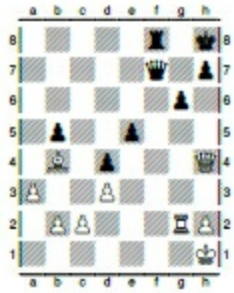
20...Nxf5 21.Nxf7+ Rxf7 22.Bxf7 Nh4 23.Rg1?!

5.10 B

Black mounts a counterattack, and it's difficult to see how defending with 23.Rg1 is a mistake; but 23.Rg1?!, removes the active rook from the f file; on g1 the rook is passive and out of play, its role as an active participant in the assault against Black's king has disappeared.

White has overestimated the attack against his pawn on g2, better for White was 23.Kg1, and if Black takes on g2 with his bishop, 23...Bxg2, it's not a check, and White can meet this move with 24.Rce1, threatening 25.Re8+, winning Black's queen for a rook, and White is better: 23.Kg1 Bxg2 24.Rce1 Bc6 25.Qg3 Nf5 26.Rxf5 gxf5 27.Be6 Ra8 28.Bxf5 Qc7 29.Bf4 Re8 30.Rxe8+ Courtesy of Fritz.

But believe it or not after 23.Rg1, Black can make a draw: 23...Qe7 24.Rce1 Be5 25.Bxa5 Rf8 26.Rxe5 dxe5 (26...Qxe5 27.Qxh4) 27.Bb4 Qxf7 28.Qxh4 Bxg2+ 29.Rxg2



Black can force a perpetual check: 29...Qf1+ 30.Rg1 Qf3+ 31.Rg2 Qf1+

Again this comes courtesy of an engine. 23.Rg1?!, looked fine to me, and

since neither my opponent or myself is a computer we both missed Black's drawing chance.

Back to the game:

23...Rc5

Black continues in an aggressive fashion with the threat of 24...Rf5, forking White's queen and the bishop on f7.

24.Bxa5

24.Rce1 was also possible.

5.11 B

24...Qa8?

24...Rf5? is simply meet with 25.Qxf5 Qxa5 26.Qg5 when Black is down two exchanges and a pawn.

See diagram 5.12.

Black is keen to maintain his press against the pawn on g2, and thinks that 25.Qxh4 can be answered by 25...Qxa5, but he then sees, to his horror, that 25...Qxa5 gives White a fork against his queen and rook with 26.b4, so after the text move of 25.Qxh4, Black retreats his rook, and hopes that he still has the time to even the score with 26...Qxa5, but White wont be that

generous:

25.Qxh4 Rc8

Black could have continued with 25...Qxa5, and meet 26.b4, with 26...Rh5, but 27.Qe7, leaves White firmly in the driving seat.

After the retreat of Black's rook White is quick to finish Black off.

26.Bxg6 h6 27.Bd2 1–0

Why did Black lose this game?

Black lost due to a number of reasons. Firstly he chose a theoretically dubious line with 3...Nd4, this is inferior to the more frequently played 3...g6, 3...e6 or 3...d6. He then weakened his position with 13...Nc6, using the knight to defend his attacked pawn on d4, this diluted his control over the f5 square, furthermore, Black was plagued with a lack of natural counter-play and drifted; when White did attack with the pawn advance to f5, Black capitulated by opening the diagonal for White's bishop on a2; Black then commenced a counterattack which was not properly pursued, and he lacked insight against the tactical 24.Bxa5.

What lessons can we learn from this game?

One: It's worth doing some homework on your openings, especially if you enter into a theory rich line of play.

Two: Pay attention! Has this one been mentioned before? Don't disengage pieces that are doing a good defensive job, as Black did when he moved the knight from e7 to c6, on move thirteen.

Three: Think things through, Black miscalculated his response to 24.Bxa5 with 24...Qa8, thinking that he could still recapture on a5 with his queen.

Game six: S.EA. N. OtherInternet2021

Here are my observations:

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c3!? d5 3.d3!? g6 4.Nbd2 Bg7 5.e4 dxe4 6.dxe4 Nc6 7.Bc4 e5 8.0–0 0–0 9.Qc2 a6 10.h3 b5 11.Be2 Bb7 12.Rd1 Qe7 13.Nf1 h6 14.Be3 g5? 15.Ng3 Bc8? 16.b4 Rd8 17.a3 Be6 18.c4 Na7? 19.cxb5 axb5 20.Rac1 c6 21.Bc5 Qb7 22.Nxe5 Ne8?! 23.Ng4 Rd7 24.Nf5 Bxf5 25.exf5 Rad8? 26.Rxd7 Rxd7 27.Bf3 Nd6 28.Bxa7!? Qxa7 29.Qxc6!? Nc4 30.Re1 Rd2 31.f6 Bf8 32.Re8 h5?? 33.Rxf8+! Kxf8 34.Qc8+ Rd8 35.Qxd8# 1–0

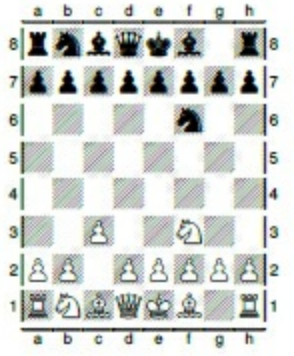
What happened in this game?

1.Nf3

White's first move is flexible; it's a non-descript move that often transposes to recognised openings such as the Queen's Gambit Declined, or any number of Indian Defences.

1...Nf6 2.c3!?

See diagram 6.1



6.1 B

2.c3!? is a concession. This move does nothing to gain control in the centre, other than preparing d4, but this preparation is not necessary as d4 can

be played immediately.

The point behind White's play is to break the grip of theory. White plays little known, rarely ventured moves with the effect of throwing Black out of theory immediately, and thus forcing Black to think for himself.

Andrew Martin has released a DVD, which features 1.c3 (The Saragossa) or 1.d3 (The Mieses Opening), which he entitles The White Lion, or Slow Poison.

With the same idea of taking Black out of theory at the earliest possible moment, but I added my own little twist to this by prefixing 1.c3, with 1.Nf3. I recently played this line in a Rapid play tournament in Birmingham, UK, and scored 3 out of 3, so it must have something going for it, shame that I only managed 1 out of 4, with the Black pieces.

Black reacts to this 'non-theory' in a reasonable fashion, aiming for a Grunfield type set-up.

3.d3 g6 4.Nbd2 Bg7 5.e4

See diagram 6.2

6.2 B

White grabs a stake in the centre, and the game takes on a more conventional appearance.

5...dxe4

The position in diagram 6.2, has been reached before on a handful of occasions, and Black scores better with 5...0-0, than 5...dxe4, but Black's response (5...dxe4), looks reasonable, how else does he prevent 6.e5 and 7.d4?, when White gains a big grip in the centre.

6.dxe4

The exchange of pawns creates an open d file.

6...Nc6

Black wants to prevent 7.e5, and if possible he will play his e pawn to this important central square.

7.Bc4

7.Bb5 was possible.

7...e5 8.0–0 0–0 9.Qc2 a6

See diagram 6.3

6.3 W

This is an interesting stage for White as he has competing priorities. White can play 10.h3, restricting the development of Black's light-squared bishop, but this allows Black to hit out against his well placed bishop on c4 with 10...b5; White could stop Black from playing 10...b5, with 10.a4, but this permits Black good development for his bishop with 10...Bg4, alternatively White could reject both 10.a4, and 10.h3, in favour of 10.Rd1, grabbing the open d file.

10.h3 b5

6.4 W

I was going to mark this move down at first with?!, but the advance of the b pawn is not dubious providing that Black follows it by quickly advancing the c pawn, otherwise the c7 pawn becomes backward and may well be targeted by White.

11.Be2 Bb712.Rd1 Qe7. See diagram 6.5, on the next page.

6.5 W

Black completes his development. White has some unravelling to do before he can arrive at the same juncture. Engines agree that the position is more or less even, with perhaps a very small plus for White.

13.Nf1 h6 14.Be3 g5?

6.6 W

Black has a rush of blood to the head and sees a possible attack on the kingside, but 14...g5?, is weakening as it opens up holes on Black's kingside, in particular the f5 square now becomes weak and is a prime target for a White knight. Much better for Black was 14...Na5, when he has solid options to choose between such as 15...c5, 16...Nc4, or 16...Nc6, and he is fine.

15.Ng3 Bc8?

Black guards f5 against a possible knight invasion, but he makes a retrograde move with his bishop, thus damaging the cohesion in his position,

his pawn on c7 is looking isolated and backward, the knight on c6 has lost the protection of the bishop on b7, and the line of communication that existed between his rooks on the first rank is broken, not bad for just one move, 15...Qe6, was a reasonable alternative for Black.

16.b4 Rd8 17.a3 Be6 18.c4 Na7?

6.7 W

Where is Black going with this knight? The knight abandons the e5 pawn, leaving this pawn up for grabs, does Black intend a re-routing of the knight with ...Nc8, to d6, can White take the e5 pawn?

19.cxb5

White sticks to his plan of opening the c file. Taking the pawn with 19.Nxe5, looks a bit suspect as Black has 19...Nd7, pinning White's knight on e5 against his rook on a1, best to avoid the distraction of pawn grabs.

19...axb5

Black's pawn on c7 becomes a prime target.

20.Rac1 c6

See diagram 6.8

6.8 W

Black's knight on a7 is a wretched creature, his pawn on c6 is all but lost, as is his pawn on e5. White is spoilt for choice.

21.Bc5 Qb7 22.Nxe5 Ne8?!

Why move the knight? On f6 the knight is well placed, but Black sees that moving the knight discovers an attack against White's knight on e5, but White re-deploys his e5 knight and now Black's knight on e8 is misplaced, and Black will have to take time out to bring it back into the fold.

23.Ng4 Rd7 24.Nf5 Bxf5 25.exf5 Rad8?

Black's desire to contest, and ultimately gain control, of the d file is understandable, but he needs to make sense of the knight on e8, what is it doing there? Black should have brought this piece back into play with 25...Nf6; ultimately challenging on the d file with his rooks leaves Black with a first rank weakness.

26.Rxd7 Rxd7

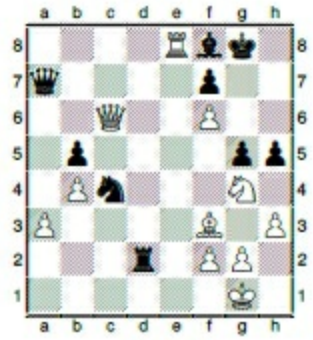
Black has abandoned his first rank leaving it weak.

27.Bf3 Nd6 28.Bxa7 Qxa7 29.Qxc6 Nc4

Black could have done better with 29...Nxf5.

30.Re1 Rd2 31.f6 Bf8 32.Re8 h5??

See diagram 6.9



6.9 W

At first glance 32...h5, looks like a fair move, since Black targets the knight on g4 which is holding White's pawn on f2, and thereby defending the integrity of the White king, but Black totally overlooks the danger that he is in, he failed to look at a check that was available to his opponent, and this elementary failing proves to be his downfall, White has a forced mate:

33.Rxf8+! Kxf8 34.Qc8+ Rd8 35.Qxd8# 1–0

How did Black lose this game?

White played an unconventional opening, however, a classical set-up with both sides having a pawn in the centre soon emerged. Black went wrong with 14...g5?, which created a hole on f5. White was quick to try to exploit this with 15.Ng3. Black covered his weakness with 15...Bc8?, but perhaps 15...Qe6, was better.

However, Black seemed to go wrong at an earlier stage; from move eleven to seventeen Black had a straight forward plan of ...Na5, and pushing his c pawn to c5, when he could have continued with ...Nc4, or he could have played the knight back to c6, however, Black consistently overlooked this idea and effectively this gave him a backward pawn on c7, this was a strategic failing on Black's part. White recognised this and opened up the queenside to get at Black's weak pawn.

Black lost cohesion with 18...Na7. The knight on a7 is horrible; it is misplaced, out of play, and largely useless. In the meantime White wins the pawn on e5, and Black makes the a7 knight work for a living as it ends up protecting the c pawn which Black advances to c6, but the c pawn is doomed as White bides his time and exchanges his bishop for the a7 knight on move twenty eight, thus picking up Black's c6 pawn. Black is now two pawns down for zero compensation: see the next diagram.

From this position Black looks lost, but given the materiel still on board, Black might yet be able to turn the tables and come up with something; he could try exchanging down to an ending of opposite coloured bishops, but it is most unlikely that White will oblige him in this aim.

Indeed, Black attempts to conjure up counter-play with 30...Rd2, taking aim at White's f2 pawn, and planning an attack against White's king; all he has to do is to remove the guardian knight on g4, that is holding the f2 pawn; but Black's first rank is very weak, and Black's counterattack is short-sighted. Black, however, is set-upon a path, he is going to attack; instances such as this bear testimony to a philosophy of optimism and hope triumphing over reason. Black becomes totally focused on his own attack, and is blinkered to all other considerations.

This becomes apparent after 32...h5?? This is Black's final mistake that costs him the game. Black failed to look at a check that White has – 33.Rxf8+! This is a type of elementary blunder, but it is clocked to a degree by Black concentrating on his own attack at the expenses of all other considerations, and it's not entirely obvious that the exchange sac of 33.Rxf8+!, is all that threatening, it doesn't seem to lead to a quick disaster

for Black, but it does, and in any case, by this point it is very difficult to find a defence for Black.

What can we learn from this game?

One:I would say that the most important thing to take from this game is a strategic lesson: don't leave static points in your position, such as Black's pawn on c7. Black's failure to see this was instrumental in his downfall. Effectively, this backward pawn gifted White a plan of attack.

Two:Black failed to appreciate the defensive frailties in his position. This boils down to a lack of attention, we have mentioned this before. Black should have taken some time out on at least two occasions to assess and evaluate the position; he should have advanced the c pawn and taken time out to fortify his first rank.

Three:Pay attention. Spend some time in assessing the position and finding the correct plan.

Four:Don't play short-term silly moves, like the cheapo 22...Ne8?, just for the purpose of un-covering an attack against one of your opponent's pieces which can easily be meet, leaving you having to take time out to bring the piece back to where it started, having said that, however, this is not always to be avoided, Black would not have damaged his position had he played 23...Nf6, he may even have brought about a draw by repetition, had White been willing to go down this road.

Five:Be objective. If a plan of attack suggests itself then test it out, and ask yourself if it is sound, don't tie yourself to a plan, and stick with it if it's going to shipwreck you.

If all of these six games were lost by the same person, what advice would you give to that person? What areas of his / her games would you recommend that need attention and improvement?

Certainly, there was room for improvement in all aspects of the lost

games, but if we highlight the most urgent areas we might suggest the following list:

One: Put some time aside to review your openings. Remind yourself of the basic opening principles

Two: Be more careful and accurate with your planning. Take time out during a game to conduct an assessment and evaluation of the position.

Three: Be more attentive. Pay attention to detail.

A good note to end on.

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